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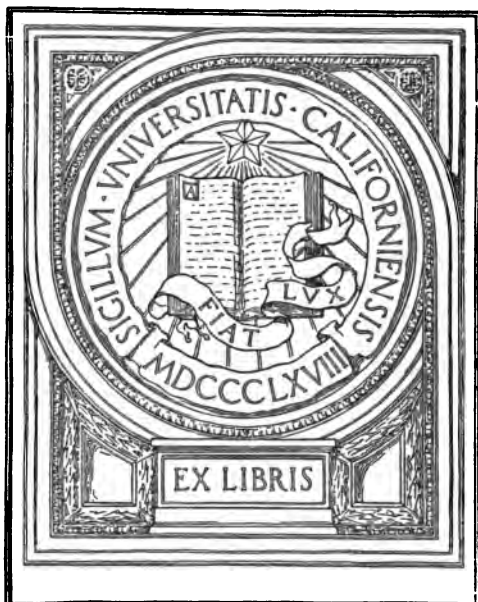
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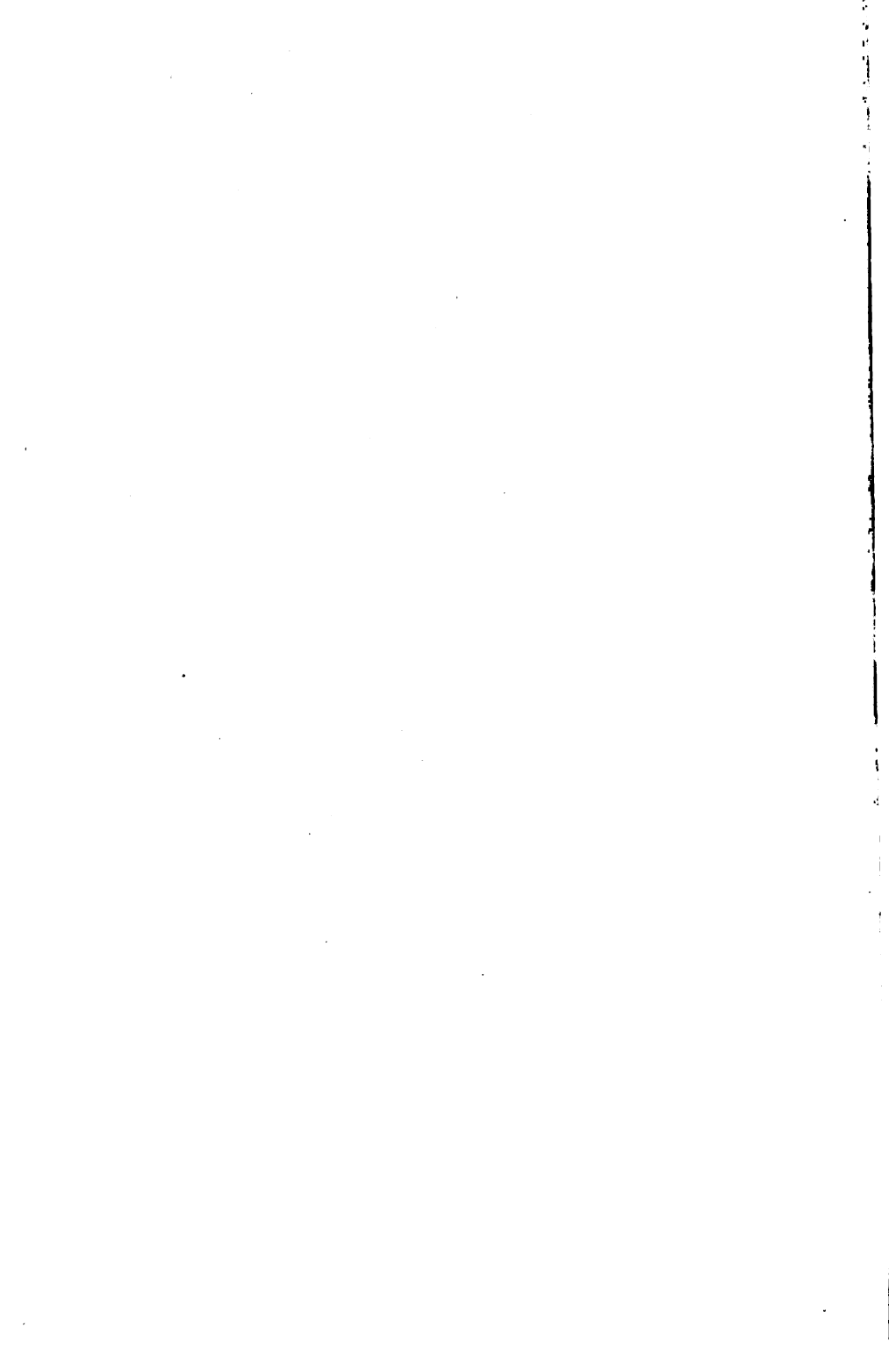
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THE KEY OF THE . .  
HEARTS OF BEGINNERS.



11

# THE KEY OF THE HEARTS OF BEGINNERS.

A Set of Tales written down in Persian by

BIBI BROOKE,

And Translated into English by

ANNETTE S. BEVERIDGE.

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IN REMEMBRANCE OF  
  
MANY PLEASANT HOURS,  
  
TO  
  
MY FRIEND, JOHN NUGENT.

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(Following the stories is what may be called a common-place book, *i.e.*, reproductions of short stories from named books, explanations of phrases, and verses. The whole volume is closed by an announcement that it is complete.)



## TRANSLATOR AND EDITOR'S PREFACE.

---

SEARCHING one day in the story-book corner of our friend, Mr. Edward Hery Whinfield's library for something written in colloquial Persian, we came upon the little manuscript which is translated into English in this volume. It bears the quaint title of the *Key of the Hearts of Beginners*; though written in Persian it is not by a Persian born and therefore does not give the idiomatic wording we were seeking; but it is treasure-trove because it not only contains good stories but reveals in their compiler a charming personality.

It was put together more than a hundred years ago by a Hindūstānī lady, a Musalmānī, who was the wife of William Augustus Brooke, one of the several Brookes then in the East India Company's service. Clearly its author was gently bred, of whatever unnamed family she came; and as a well-born Musalmānī will have been accustomed to the presence in her home of the daily teacher (*ātūn*). That an Englishman should marry her agreed with the Anglo-Indian habit of her day. Mr. W. A. Brooke went out in 1769 when about seventeen years old; he made his permanent home in India and died there, in Benares (in 1833) at the age of 81. His epitaph is preserved in the Bengal Obituary of 1848; its last words endorse his wife's account of his kindness; "His amiable character endeared him alike to the Hindī, the Musalmān and the Christian inhabitants of the city." (note).

At the time of his death, he was Senior Judge of Appeal and Governor-General's Agent in Benares. The Bibi's preface records his service in Calcutta previous to 1781-82 (A.H. 1196) and after this date, in Patna. Service in Birbhum also can be inferred from two records both of which add information about

the Bibi to that given by herself. One of them is the inscription on a tombstone which is still in the grave-yard of Surī, in Bīrbhūm; "Sacred to the memory of Arabella, the daughter of Mr. William Augustus Brooke, who died November 6th, 1787." The year 1787 falls within the period during which the Bibi was putting her tales together and the child's death may well be one of the "various misfortunes" which broke in on her progress.

The second source of information is linked to the above obituary notice by the tie of strong probability. It is a recollection of the old servant from whose lips Sir William Hunter took down his (note). "The first sāhib I distinctly remember (in Surī) was Judge Brook (e) Sāhib. My uncle was cook in his house and my earliest remembrance is of Mem-sāhiba Brook (e) walking up and down the verandah and crying because her little daughter was dead. I do not remember what she died of but I remember that my uncle carried me in his arms to see the Sāhib and Mem-sāhiba put the little girl in the ground. The coffin was carried to the tamarind-tree at the end of the garden (grave-yard) and put into the earth and then they put a white stone over it and the stone is there to this day."

As the Bibi continued to write down stories after 1787, it may be inferred that she had other children. If she has descendants, this English version of her book may introduce it to them because it has been secluded for many years both in India and in England. Her preface shows that it was finished in Patna in about 1801 and there in 1867 it was bought with other manuscripts and without knowledge of its contents, by Mr. Whinfield in whose library it has since remained.

As the Bibi's mother-tongue was Hindūstānī, the thought and idiom of her book are far from being purely Persian and are strongly toned with local colour. Looked at as literature, it is but a wayside flower and when transplanted it, like many another wild growth, has needed a good deal of trimming. A verbally exact rendering of it would not have been faithful to the good that is in the manuscript and this has made editing necessary.

In the fashion common to the spoken narrative she has set down the Bibi's diction is often diffuse and indirect; sometimes the very point of a story is dulled by a welter of words. While compressing and defining a good deal, I have tried neither to add nor to omit anything valid. Above all, since tales are many and there has been only one Bibi Brooke, I hope that her own charming personality will not be hidden by the western garment of her writings.

The stories she has told are not common; some are exceptional and of such may be mentioned *The Death Angel* and *Māmā Susān*; through one and all runs ethical purpose; they are all beads strung on the thread of desire to lead the children on.

They have too a distinction which is dear to those who love variety of human type; inasmuch as they are a woman's from end to end. Moreover they bring from afar an illustration of what some western women know and gain happiness by practising; namely that there is, for the house-mother, perennial value in a citadel of work done within her home but differing from her home occupation, to which she may retire when children pass from her care or when sorrows have assailed.

The stories have a yet wider interest and this is one they share with the book of the Bibi's comrade in Faith, the Princess Gulbadan (note). It lies in their proof that not from one religious Faith only does there radiate the inspiration to live the dutiful home-life, on which women may build up what they will of personal culture and even of far-reaching power.

Here I leave one whose spell on me has made me wish to let her be known to others; my share in her work I trust to her own charm, aided by the serene air which enwraps whatever is "without a second," unique, as is her manuscript.

ANNETTE S. BEVERIDGE.

Pitfold, Shottermill, Haslemere.

September, 1903.



## NOTES.

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1. An instance of the kind-heartedness of Mr. Brooke, is given by Mirzā Abū Tālib, in that entertaining account of his travels to and in Europe which can be read in English in Stewart's translation (London 1814). Mr. Brooke not only provided him with clothes and food for his voyage but welcomed him back with a substantial appointment.

2. This is printed as an appendix to Sir W. Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal*. At this point, it is useful to mention that though there were three Brookes partly contemporary in the Company's service with William Augustus, no one of them can well have been the Judge spoken of by the servant of this Chronicle. Digby and Robert were writers from 1795; Thomas was serving in Benares in 1803 and, it may be said in passing, there in that year had a son born to him who became later the first Rājah Brooke of Sarāwak. Whether any relationship existed between any of the four officials, I have not learned.

3. *The History of Humāyūn*. Royal Asiatic Society, 22 Albermarle Street, London, 1902.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

---

### IN THE NAME OF GOD THE MERCIFUL, THE COMPASSIONATE.

Praises without number, and lauds without limit be paid to that God Who by His perfect power and comprehensive wisdom created the Heavens and the Earth, and Night and Day, and Who spread out the Earth on the face of the waters, and made fast the roof of heaven without props and placed in it the lamps of the Sun, Moon, and Stars and Who created angels, genii, men and animals—both the ravening and the grazing, the rational and the irrational—and Who made birds and reptiles, and the Sea and the Land and the mountains. And He made His servants and worshippers. Hail to the Artist Who fashioned every creature according to their form and nature, their qualities and their colours, their voices and their sounds. His favour made various shining pearls in the Gulfs of the Ocean, in the bosoms of shells, and jewels of varied colour and of priceless value. He made the red gold and the white silver in the mines in the centre of the hills, and various other things to be the ornament of crowns and thrones, and to be the delight and solace of mankind in general. Hail to the Provider Who with perfect kindness hath bestowed varied dainties upon the dwellers upon the surface of earth, and upon those who abide in its depths. When the Earth has died, He bringeth it to life again by the rain of His Mercy, and giveth it every living thing. What wondrous kindness is His in that He giveth to all His servants work, and position according to their degrees, and capacities, and maketh each the helpmate of the other. For their instruction He hath established teachers and lectures and hath established thousands of treasuries of wisdom and hath implanted

knowledge suitable to the degree of every creature and given reason and understanding to all. His kindness is such that to all His guilty servants who have strayed into the wilderness of shame and repentance, He hath given the good news of exaltation and made them hopeful of forgiveness. (Arabic quotation; from the Koran?) His graciousness and unsolicited kindnesses cannot be reckoned up. In this matter reason is it a loss. How can mortal men recite His praises, or how can he utter even a letter of the book of His panegyric! To attempt to utter the praises of the Eternal God would be like measuring the water of the ocean in the palm of the hand, or counting the desert sand.

\* \* \* \* \*

(Here follow invocations and praises of Muhammad, the Father of all the followers of Islām, and of the prophets.)

By the Divine Will, the faulty woman who is the author of this book was honoured in early youth by entering the service of the glory of the State and splendour of the kingdom, Mr. William Augustus Brooke. May his prosperity remain! When this know-nothing had reached years of discretion, a strong desire for knowledge rose and remained in her heart. By the grace of the Giver of Knowledge she accomplished her wish, for when her lord, her fount of kindness and benefits, was appointed Collector of Bihār in the year of the Hijra 1196 (A.D. 1781-2) and left Calcutta for Azimābād (Patna) she went with him and in Patna took lessons from a very pious and well-born begam of Shāh-jahānābad (Dilhi). Later on she read the illustrious Koran and the *Pand-nāma* and the *Gul-i-stān* and made copies of them all.

When her great lord saw her so bent on being taught, he most kindly tried to give her every advantage for the study of Persian and he arranged for her to take lessons from his own munshī, Khurran-mal, a man of mature age, mild temper and angelic disposition.

Her reason for writing this volume is as follows: when she had acquired some proficiency in Persian, her teacher told her

to translate the *Mirāj-nāma* into that tongue from the Dakhīni dialect of Hindī. This she did as well as her unripe powers allowed, and finished as far as to the marriage of God's prophet (Peace be on him!) with the noble Khadija (On her be peace!). She wrote this translation into her book of miscellaneous work and her kind master said it seemed correct but that it was not vigorous and that nothing better could be expected from a beginner. He advised her next to set down in Persian stories she had heard told, for this, he said, would give her more facility and eventually she could put them together and make a book. As the lord of her favour said the same, she too formed the wish to do it and so set to work.

After a while came various misfortunes owing to which she could not go on. In the six years of her lessons from the munshī-sāhib she missed many through his frequent illness; for this reason her education has remained very imperfect both in hand-writing and in other things necessary to know. In all the six years, one and a few months only of real work was done with him. At the end of this time he fell into complete bad health and in A.H. 1202 moreover, his son died after a few hours illness. Grief for this loss made him so much worse that in the following year he hastened from this transitory world to the eternal home. His departure set the seal of regret on his pupil's lowly heart for he was a good teacher and an angel in disposition.

Later on, by the Divine favour and by her great lord's help and under the benediction of her teacher's spirit, this knowing nothing finished her simple tales as best she could. But where in them are style and eloquence to fit them for the reading of scholars and critics?

She has called her book *The Key of the Hearts of Beginners* because its humble contents are not unsuited to children. She has set down first simple anecdotes because when the little ones read these, they will smile and want to read more. This must be so in all books, then the children do not weary and are glad to go on.

The stories were told to her in Hindi and for this reason many Hindi words have been written down both to give the exact meaning and to keep point and sense. Even the later tales are only fit for beginners; how could anyone so humble as she is, write for the masters of vigorous and picturesque language who themselves are able to charm by their rhythm of prose and of verse?

When expert writers have praised God and the Prophets in their prefaces, they often give their reasons for writing and then beg excuse for oversights and errors and speak of hoping to correct and amend these later on. What can this writer, this headless, footless thing, say of hope to correct mistakes which like hers lie one on another, as an onion has coat upon coat? All that this babbler in unscholarly words can plead is that she turns the eye of expectancy to the learned and generous-hearted and begs that they will accept an apology for her mistakes and will hide all the shortcomings of her book under the mantle of their pardon.

## **The Clever Boy.\***

---

A DARWESH asked a boy whether he had ever seen the Lord God, and the boy, without a word, flung at him a clod of earth which hurt him so badly that he cried out, and angrily demanded why he was given a blow in place of a civil answer.

"The clod answered your question," said the boy.

"I see no answer in it," replied the man.

"It must have been by the Divine will that I threw it, for it really answers you. It hurt you; where is the pain? Show it me."

"Silly child! pain has no visible form."

"Neither has the Lord God," rejoined the boy. "Your pain is hidden in your arm, and just so He is hidden in His creations. No one can see Him, though He can see all men. He manifests Himself through His worshippers. Your question was unreasoning; the clod was the unreasoning answer to it."

On getting this neat rebuke, the darwesh walked away.

\* This story is included, in longer and varied form, in Gladwin's "Persian Moonshee," Calcutta, 1801.

## The Clever Riddler.

---

ONE morning a certain king was returning with a large company from hunting, and though it was still early, the sun was strong because it was the hot season. On his way he saw an old bent bleacher working in the glaring sunshine, with sweat streaming from his every pore. The king drew rein and began to question the old man, but this he did in the form of riddles.

"O bleacher! are not four contained in eight, that you are here in the heat instead of at home at ease?"

"O king!" replied the man, with ready understanding, "if I had divided eight by four, I should not have been in this plight."

"How is it with your company?"

"Sir, once it was gathered together, now it is broken up."

"How about your wits?"

"Once I had wits, now I have not even common-sense."

"What of your yoke-pair?"

"Once they moved together, now a third goes too, but nothing is gained."

The King was pleased by his readiness, gave him something there and then and ordered him to come to the palace where he gave other gifts and made a fixed allowance to support him and his family. "You are old, too old to be toiling and moiling. Go home and enjoy what I have given, and do not work any more."

The bleacher made his lowest reverence, loaded up his heaven-sent new possessions and went all joyous and smiling to his village.

Now the Prime Minister who rode at the King's right hand, had not understood one single word of all the conversation

between the King and the bleacher. He was afraid he might be asked if he had followed it, and that if he said no, he would be set down for a blockhead. So he went back at once to the bleacher and asked what the talk had been about, promising to give as much as the King himself had given, if all were made clear to him.

"O Wazir! it is all very simple," said the old man. "The first question was about the months and years. As you know, there are eight good and pleasant months, the rains and the cold season, and there are four bad ones when the sun is hot and fierce. When the King saw me, who am so feeble, at work in the sun, he asked me whether I had not saved enough in the good months to keep me in the bad ones without work."

"The second question was about my teeth; when a man is young his teeth sit in company, side by side; when he is old they scatter."

"Then His Majesty asked about my eyes; people call the eyes the far-seers, and to be far-sighted is also to have your wits. When I was young, I was far-sighted and could see for miles; now I have not even ordinary sight, for you are but a shadow to me. What I said of my teeth is true of my eyes; it is true of all the senses; they all fail when a man gets old."

"When the King asked about my yoke-pair, he meant my legs. Once these took me where I wanted to go; now I can't get about with this third help, my staff."

The Wazir praised the old man for his quick wits, and, having paid him well, returned to the palace with a light heart, primed to explain the riddles.



## The Four Friends.

---

EARLY one morning four school-boy friends went out of town to walk in a garden, and when they had enjoyed all its beauties, they sat down about mid-day to rest and eat. Now each had expected one of the others to bring food, but no body had done this, and as they were very hungry, one set out to find a shop. He heard from a ploughman whom he passed, that there was no shop near, but that the hindū priest, who lived at a house he pointed out, might give something. The boy went to the *jogi's* house, found him with his wife and several disciples, and much cooking going on. He asked that some food might be given to him in kindness.

"I will give you some," said the priest, "if you will tell me a story I never heard before."

"In such a land," began the boy, "there was a childless king"; but here the *jogi* interrupted him with, "I've heard that before."

"Once upon a time," began the boy again, "a Wazir had a daughter who was good, beautiful and adorned with every accomplishment"; but he was stopped with the same objection. So it went on; to every tale the boy started, the *jogi* cried, "That I know."

"I can think of no more," said the boy. Then that black-hearted *jogi* told his disciples to slap him, and this they did till his face was scarlet. He went dolefully back to his friends, rubbing his cheeks with both hands. They hailed his return with delight. "What have you brought?"

"Nothing!" he said. "I went to a house, but what fell to my share was so peppery that it made my face all burning red." He said this out of shame at being slapped. One of the others remarked that it looked very much as though he

had eaten all that had been given to him and had forgotten his friends, and added that he would now go and see what he could do.

"The man of the house I went to is ill-natured and miserly," objected the first; "what he gave me I regard as nothing but an insult. It's of no use for you to go."

But with the flame of hunger burning fiercely in him, the second friend was bent on trying his luck, and hurried off to meet the fate of the first. The *jogi* had heard the tale of "the open-handed merchant, who spent his time pleasantly and enjoyed life," and all the other tales which he started to tell. Slapping followed, and the boy went back to the garden, rubbing his cheeks, and keeping his misadventure to himself. A third of the four tried and met with just the same fate; but with the fourth things went better. When the *jogi* had cried out, "Beat the senseless ignoramus and drive him off," he divined what had happened to his companions, and set himself to get the better of their tormentor.

"Don't send me away! I can tell you something else quite new. Listen, most honoured teacher," he began, and he went on to describe at length a marvel, he said he had seen upon the road from town, which was an egg-plant in a small garden, so big that a hundred men were there to take it away. Now as an egg-plant is but a small bush generally, the *jogi* became quite excited at this news, and demanded to be shown the way to see the wonder. The boy led him on for about a mile, then waved his hand towards a distant garden wall, and spoke of hearing the sound of hacking and of the crowd. "I will wait here till you come back," he said, and sat down.

The *jogi* hurried off as well as his age and size would let him go, but the boy rose and raced back as fast as his young feet could take him, and panted out to the *jogini* and the disciples, "Why do you all stay here? Wretches have attacked the *jogi* and beaten him, and he is lying in the road."

This upset them all dreadfully. They entreated him to stay in the name of Heaven, and see that no ass or dog came into the house to pollute it, and when he agreed, they all ran off. Just for triumph, the musalmān ate a little of the abundant food he found ready in the hindū house, then wrapped up a quantity in a cloth, swung it on his shoulders, and hastened to set it before his friends. When their hunger was satisfied, he told them how he had tricked the evil-hearted *jogi*, and all laughed heartily, and compared their misadventures, and praised his clever tongue. Then they started home, beguiling the way with mirth and talk.

## The Margrave and the Puppets.

---

LONG ago a certain Warden of the Marches had an adorable daughter, for whom he was always seeking a bridegroom who should be as handsome as she was, and also be clad in wisdom and knowledge. It was very difficult to find such a paragon and there was fear besides lest the Margrave should be deceived by a false appearance of goodness and give his daughter to the wrong man. So he laid the following plan to test the wits of suitors: he had two dolls fashioned which looked exactly alike in size and form and face and dress, but which differed in a way the Margrave kept to himself. These puppets he had placed near the door of his private hall of audience where all comers and goers could see them, and he made it known by public proclamation that he would give his daughter in marriage to anyone who could tell in what way the dolls differed and why this difference made one worth more than the other.

On hearing this glad news, kings' sons and the sons of wazirs and of grandees flocked in brave array from far and near to examine the puppets. Not one, however, could see the smallest difference between them, and murmurs began to be heard that there was no difference whatever, and that the Margrave had no intention of marrying off his daughter at all. So came and went in vain many handsome men who were brilliant matches for even the Margrave's child.

At length, led by the Divine will and his own happy star, there arrived in the city of the Lord Marcher a young noble who was singularly good-looking, was eloquent and instructed, and had been a pupil of the best masters in wisdom and manners and in the art of sensible question and reply. On his arrival he heard of the proclamation about the dolls and

went to try his fate. At first, like the rest of the suitors, he could see no difference whatever between the two. He stood pondering for a long time before them, and turning over this and that in his mind. At last an idea occurred to him. He forced a bit of straw into the ear of one of the dolls; it came out of the mouth and fell to the ground. He put it into the ear of the other; it disappeared inside the doll's body. Having discovered this difference, the wise youth, the discernor of subtleties, had no difficulty in knowing in what one doll was better than the other.

He desired a servant to announce him to the Margrave as one who had read the riddle and claimed his reward. When he was presented, his good looks, well-bred air and whole demeanour were found all that could be wished, and he was asked to explain the puzzle of the dolls.

"At first," he said, "I could see no difference between them, my lord, but I came to know that one is really better than the other, for one is a concealer of faults and foolish words, and the other a gossip and render of the curtain (*parda*)."

"Pray, how do you make this out?" asked the Margrave.

"What goes in at the ear of one comes out of the mouth; what goes in at the ear of the other remains concealed. One is discreet, the other a blab-all."

The Lord Marcher was pleased by this proof of sense and insight; he set to work to get together his daughter's outfit and such household plenishing and materials for the wedding feast as chieftains use. Time flew; the feast was decked, and in a happy hour the marriage rites performed. In his later years the wise youth rose to honour and dignity and touched the crest of Heaven-sent fortune.

## The Humiliation of the Shāhanshāh (King of Kings).

---

LONG ago there dwelt a king in Hindūstān, on whom the True King of Heaven and Earth had bestowed lands and wealth, good fortune and great armies, with such sway over other rulers that he was styled Shāhanshāh, the King of Kings. Though he was lifted so high only by the Divine might, he grew careless and conceited and would sometimes say to his wazīr, "I am such that I can do what I will." To these impious and thankless words the minister used to answer, "It is God only Who does what He wills ; what power have men?" Disputes often arose about this between the king and wazīr.

Now one day, when the Shāhanshāh had gone into his private closet, he saw an emmet run in under the door, and stand still in the middle of the chamber, and there grow and grow till it was bigger than himself. It then clawed him up, and sailed with him out through the casement, and far away to a distant land where it set him down in a waste place and vanished. The king was overwhelmed by his sudden separation from pomp and power, and now remembered Who was Omnipotent, and prayed for forgiveness and for restoration to his home.

When he rose from his knees he looked to right and to left for a road, but found none, and could only walk on through the jungle. At length he came to an open plain ; no house could be seen ; that night the lowly earth was the bed of the King of Kings. One thought chased another through his mind, and he acknowledged that in truth he was weaker than even an ant. He could not sleep ; he had no food ; he spent a night of untold discomfort counting the stars. When

day dawned he walked on and on till he came to a city ; he went in and stopped before an oil-presser's, who noticed him and the marks of distinction in his face and mien.

"What is surprising you?" asked the light-maker. "Have you lost anything? I perceive that you are some great man's son."

"Do not suppose me great," rejoined the king, "I am the helpless toy of fortune and weaker than an ant. I have come here for food, but I have no friend in this city and I do not know where to go."

The oil-man took compassion on him, and said, "You can stay here. I will keep you and you can regard my house as your own."

Cheered by these kind words the king went in, and he stayed there and helped the owner in his business. He soon noticed that though much oil was sold, no accounts of sales were kept, but the money received was just cast into a box. So he offered to make daily entries of all sales. "I sit idle here ; it is best for me to work." "It would certainly be good to have an account kept, and if you can read and write, keep one," answered the oil-man. From that day the King of Kings set down the *dinārs* and *dirhams* and *pice* and *cowries*, and added them up every night, and showed the account to the oil-man. Time passed, but he never went outside the shop. Servants of the palace used to deal with this oilman, and to see the Shāhanshāh sitting daily at his work. When they had heard him speak, one said to another, "That's a strange clerk for an oil-shop ; he looks like a high-bred man, and speaks like a prince. A turn of fortune's wheel must have put him where he is ; he ought to serve the King." Thus it came about that when a tutor was wanted for the heir-apparent, one of those servants spoke about the oil-man's clerk, and submitted that he seemed worthy to serve the King.

A messenger was sent to fetch the Shāhanshāh and said

courteously to him that the King had heard of him and wished to see him.

It was a little hard to obey a call from one who in old days might have been a subject prince, but it was unbecoming to refuse, so the King of Kings asked for a holiday from the oil-man and accompanied the royal messenger.

When examination showed that he had himself all the accomplishments of a prince, he was appointed tutor to the King's son, and entrusted with full charge of him. He and his pupil lived in a place apart, and he devoted himself with his whole energy to his task of forming and educating the prince. This went on for some time and he rose in honour and esteem.

Through arrogance and impiety the King of Kings had been made to endure his present humiliation. His words, "I am such that I can do as I will," had displeased the Uncompanioned One, and He punished the boaster by showing that an emmet could overrule his will. Now, once more, He is about to teach a warning lesson, and a second time to cast down the King of Kings from pride to the depths of consternation.

One day, when the King had sent a tray of fruits into the school-room, the prince peeled one, and began to put pieces of it into his mouth with the point of his knife. "Fruit is not eaten with a knife," called out the tutor; "take it in your hand. If you sneezed with the knife in your mouth, you might fall forwards on it, and it might go into your palate and hurt you badly." The prince paid no attention, but went on as before; he chanced to sneeze; the knife pierced the roof of his mouth and he died of the wound.

The tutor fell into despair from fear of the royal anger and sat trembling and expecting a summons to the presence. While he waited, the very ant appeared which had carried him away from his own palace. Again it grew and grew, and



clawed him up, and carried him through the air, and it set him down in the place from which it had taken him.

He opened the door and looked out; for some time no one saw him: by and bye some of the Queen's women came near and, seeing him, said, "What man is this?" They looked carefully and thinking that he was very like the lost Shāhanshāh, ran to tell the Queen. The grief which had clouded the palace now changed to joy; music and singing burst forth, the drum of exultation was beaten, and the glad news flashed like lightning through the city.

The Shāhanshāh took all that he had suffered as a just punishment for his proud and impious words, and repented heartily and prayed with contrite heart for pardon. To his wise and faithful wazīr he told all that had befallen him, and said, "You were right; only the Lord of Might brings to pass what He wills."

## **The Biter Bit.**

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A CERTAIN beggar in Hindūstān had the habit of crying the same words as he went from house to house, "Our deeds come to light. A man gets what he gives." Now one woman to whose house he used to go, got dreadfully worried by hearing the same thing so often and at last, when she was in a bad temper, grumbled to herself, "Hideous creature! Is that all he can say? I will teach him his own lesson, and stop him and his cry. Then we shall see how a man's deeds come to light!"

That black-hearted woman accordingly baked two round, sweet cakes of wheaten flour and put some poison into them. When the beggar next came crying past, she gave them to him and said, "I baked these for myself, but I have nothing else to give you, so take them." He thanked her and went out of the village to his own poor hut.

That night, when he had washed his hands and face, he took the cakes and was just going to eat them, when a man and boy came up and asked leave to stay there for the night. They said they were tired and famished, and could not go further, though their home was in the village. "O friend! let us stay!"

"Who are you?" asked the beggar.

"We are wayfarers who left the village to find work, but we found none, and we are very weary and cast down, and we have no heart to go on to-night. If you will let us sleep here, we will go to-morrow early."

"Stay!" said the beggar, "enlighten my poor dwelling with the lamp of your presence."

The two tired wayfarers then loosed their girdles and washed off the soil of the road and sat down. "O friend of

the poor!" said the elder, "we have no food; if you would share the beggar's dole with us, we should think it really kind."

"Take these two cakes, father," replied the faqir, "I got them to-day from a good little woman." The hungry pair took them without demur, ate them, drank water and lay down to their death-sleep.

When the labourers began to go out to work in the fields next morning, some of them stopped to ask who the late sleepers were.

"They are wayfarers," answered the beggar.

"Why do you not waken them that they may go on their road?"

"I have tried, but they neither move nor answer." One villager went close; he saw no rise and fall of their wrappers; called and got no answer. Then he drew the cloths from over their faces. "Why, they are dead! and they are So-and-So's husband and son of our village."

A crowd gathered round, and questions were put to the beggar who truthfully told all that had happened. He was not believed; hands were laid on him and he was accused of their death.

"You have murdered them for the money they had earned. Wretch! Wretch! You robber under a beggar's cloak! We've caught you! You shall get what you deserve!" Then they took up the dead and led him with them, bound.

At the sound of their coming that woman ran out; what did she see? Her own husband and her son lying dead at her door! "Kind Sirs," said the beggar, "this is the good little woman who gave me the cakes yesterday. Did you not give me two sweet cakes?" At this question she began to beat her breast and head and to cast dust on herself and to cry, "Woe! woe! alas! alas! why has this fire descended to devour me?"

The faqir tried to check her cries, and said, "O mother! I had taken those cakes from my wallet and was going to eat them, when Fate led these two to my hut. They were hungry, so I gave them your cakes and fasted. This morning I saw that the hapless creatures had surrendered their souls to their Creator. I, who am innocent, have been accused and beaten."

"Alas! alas! great is my sin!" rejoined she. "O friend of Heaven, I will tell the truth. I put poison into the cakes because I was tired of hearing you always say the same thing. But as you are an innocent man, Heaven has not let you eat them, and they have ended by killing my husband and my son. Your cry is true! Our deeds come to light, and I have fallen into the pit I dug for you."

So they loosed the beggar, and bore away the dead for burial.

## Gulling the Gossip.

---

A TRAVELLER came tired and hungry to his inn and desired the woman of the house to cook food for him at once.

"Oh, sir!" she said, "tell me first what news there is."

"I have heard none," he answered.

In a short time she asked, "Is there any news stirring?"

At this the weary man grew impatient and said crossly, "My good woman, I have told you already that I have no news to give you; if I had, why should I not tell it you?" Even this did not silence her and a third time she put the same question. Her persistence provoked him to play her the trick of inventing news to give her. So he got up from his seat, and when she asked him where he was going, said he had business in the bāzār, and would want his food directly he got back. After strolling about a little, he took his way back to the inn. "Where have you been?" demanded the woman; "why are you so late? Your food is cold."

"I went to the bāzār on business, but a most strange sight made me late coming back; I couldn't take my eyes off it."

"Whatever was it?" she gasped.

"Well, it was the longest radish I ever saw; it was quite amazing."

"Oh, Sir, please tell me how long it was."

"Well, it was loaded on seven carts, one behind the other, and even then half of it dragged along the ground. A great crowd was following it."

This story left no choice; she had to go, and off she ran, leaving the traveller in charge of the house. Before long the inn-keeper came up with a load of wood, and after vainly searching for her, asked the stranger if he had seen the woman of the house.

"Who are you?" asked the traveller.

"Sir, I am the inn-keeper, and the woman I ask about is my wife."

"Oh! oh!" said the stranger, with meaning in his tone. "A little while ago a very good-looking young fellow came along; quite smart, in clean clothes, and she went away with him." On hearing this the husband fell into a sudden rage, snatched up one of the traveller's slippers, and ran off to find his wife. He turned to the right, and in a few moments his wife ran up from the left. When she saw the wood lying in the court-yard, she forgot all about the radish and inquired what had become of her husband, and why he had left the wood lying in such a place?

"He had no sooner brought it here," answered the traveller, "than a woman came by; quite a lovely person, dressed in fine clothes, and with all her ornaments on, and he went away with her." On hearing this the wife, too, fell into a sudden rage; she snatched up the traveller's second slipper and followed her husband. They soon met, and forthwith began to abuse and to slipper one another; but at last they started home, squabbling and reviling.

Now, while they were both away, their young son had passed the traveller, going out to play with other boys, and a little later his sister had come in from her husband's house to see her parents. Not finding them, she spoke to the stranger, and asked if he could tell her where they were. He replied quietly, "Your brother is dead; they have gone to bury him." On this the girl began to wail and to call on her brother by name, and to beat her head and breast, and scream, "Woe! alas!" And when presently her parents appeared and found her bowed down by grief, they too began to wail, and asked, "O luckless one! why are you mourning? Why do you call on your living brother as though he were dead?"

"This traveller told me he was dead, and that you had gone to bury him," she answered.

The bewildered inn-keeper now turned to the teller of all these many fibs, and asked him why he had told them, and brought about a wicked quarrel between him and his wife, and terrified them and their daughter.

"I did it," rejoined the guest tranquilly, "for a lesson. Your good woman annoyed me by asking again and again for news after I had told her I had none. She would not believe me when I told the truth, so when her worrying went too far, I thought I would see if she would believe me when I lied. So, I made up some news to suit her."

Man and wife both now declared they had never heard anything so good in all their lives before. "You certainly did make up well," said the inn-keeper. "Very funny and tiresome news, too, it was. We owe you a thousand thanks for your entertainment."

## Who Killed the Tiger?

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A CERTAIN tract of land went to waste near an Indian village because a man-eater made it his hunting-ground. No-one dared to work there; no-one was safe to cross it; from very fear, the people round grew weary of their lives. The Rāja of the country heard of the pest and after considering this and that to get rid of it, proclaimed that he would give the desolated lands to any person who brought the tiger dead before him.

Just at this time, a soldier chanced to cross the waste, on his way from home to take foreign service. He came upon the tiger and being, as he was, a soldier and expert bowman, he set an arrow on the string, and aimed and hit so true that the beast's brain was pierced and it had not power to draw another breath. The soldier knew nothing about the offered reward, so he went on his way and left the carcase lying in the jungle.

Now by the Divine preordainment, a grocer had to cross the waste the very next day and as Fortune bethought herself of him and as such was his destiny, he found the dead tiger. He knew all about the reward so he conveyed the body to the palace and said, "I killed the beast." The Rāja praised his valour and said, "Your courage has set my people free from dread and danger and has drawn round them a circle of repose. I am content with you; I give you the jungle. Go now, plough it, sow it, cultivate it and build houses on it. I remit all taxes and dues on it; these shall be to your profit. I will bear the cost of its reclamation." He gave an order on his Treasury for a sum sufficient for the work and the happy grocer received the royal gift with grateful salaams. Forthwith the new owner began to reclaim his estate and in due



time, the jungle vanished and houses were set up; ploughing and sowing were done and by the Divine favour, the former desolation gave place to a beautiful, habitable village and to fields abundant in harvest.

Three prosperous years had passed over the head of the grocer when the soldier who had been the cause of his good fortune, again crossed the jungle returning to his home. He asked a man he met how the change he saw had been brought about for, said he, "when I went on service, there was such a jungle here that I killed a tiger in it."

"What you say about there having been jungle here is true," replied the man, "but if you say you killed the man-eater that used to haunt it, you do not speak the truth for all the world knows it was killed by the grocer who got these lands for his reward and money too, to bring them back to cultivation. If you killed the tiger, why did you not claim the Rāja's reward?"

The soldier saw at once how things had gone but said nothing then and went his way to the Rāja and laid the facts before him. He was not believed at first and got hard words and was told he lied. He however told his story over again quietly and said the matter was one for consideration. "I am a bold man," he went on, "I was travelling by the jungle road; there I saw the harmful beast and shot it with a single arrow. Here are the tools of my trade, my bow, my arrows, my sword and my shield. I knew nothing of your proclamation or I should have brought in the dead tiger, and should have received what has been given to the grocer."

When the Rāja had grasped the story, he said that there were difficult points in it and that he could not settle them and that it was best to carry the matter to the Judge. The soldier then told his tale to the Judge who listened carefully and promised that justice should be done next day. He more-

over summoned the grocer and asked him for particulars of his killing the tiger. Then he dismissed them both and thought the whole matter out. The case was difficult because neither man had a witness. The Judge however bethought himself of a device for settling which of them would be the more likely to face a man-eater. Next day, he called in the grocer and before the man appeared, he twisted a straw into his beard. He then put many questions to him who pleaded that he could not have got the tiger if he had not killed it. "Heaven knows where this soldier has sprung from ; it looks as if he had heard of the royal bounty to me and coveted my property. Your Honour is wise ! Do me justice."

As he talked, his eye rested on the straw in the Judge's beard and when he had finished his own plea, he added politely, "Qāzi Sāhib ! there is a straw hanging from your reverend beard." "Is there so ?" asked the Judge, "will you come forward and take it out ?" Accordingly he went close and had just put out his hand to take out the straw, when the Judge gave a sudden halloa which so terrified the grocer that he fell senseless to the ground. "Ah !" thought the Judge "a man who faints at a single shout, would hardly have faced a tiger." As soon as the grocer had been carried out, the soldier was called in. He too was questioned and he too noticed the straw hanging in the Judge's beard and spoke of it. When he had stretched out his hand to remove it, the Judge shouted out twice with all his might whereupon the soldier dealt him such a blow that his face was all disfigured. This settled the matter ; the Judge decided that the bold man had killed the man-eater and that the grocer was a liar. The newly-peopled village was given to its rightful owner who sent to his home for his family and children and in their company spent the rest of his life in comfort and prosperity.

## One use for a Quarrelsome Woman.

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THERE once lived a quarrelsome woman who used to abuse and to slipper her husband, till his life was a burden and his house a place of penance. In his wretchedness, he used often to go out and sit under a pipal tree that grew not far from his door and where he could have quiet. After some years he had become so unhappy that he ran away and hid himself amongst the crowds in the chief town of the country. When his wife found that he had gone, she said, "What matter! I will beat his tree in his stead." So every day she used to abuse him as though he were there and to strike the pipal with her iron-shod slipper.

In the pipal lived a jinn who had always had a friendly feeling for the exile and who got most uncomfortable under the bad words and hard blows of his wife. "Her very husband couldn't endure this wretch of an ill-bred woman any longer," he thought, "and so he ran away. She goes after him as far as she can by abusing and beating the tree he cared for. How long am I to endure it? It is getting time for me to go off too."

So the jinn also went to the capital where he put on the form of a man and and strolled about looking for his fellow-exile whom he found seated in the porch between the town gates.

"Peace be with you, friend!" said the jinn. "Is all well with you?"

"Brother!" rejoined the man, surprised by this address from a stranger, "I have never seen you **before** and, except in the Divine Name, have neither friend nor kin in this city. Who are you that wish me peace and ask for my welfare?"

"I am the jinn who used to live in the pipal tree near your

house and the horror that drove you away has driven me away too. Your wife took to abusing and slipping your tree and I could not stand it."

At the word "jinn," the man trembled and grew pale, but the demon said consolingly, "Why need you fear? You have done me no harm; do not turn away from a friend." From that day forth the jinn used his magic powers to help the man in all his needs.

Now one day it chanced that the jinn saw the King's daughter and he fell in love with her. He told his friend about it and said that for some time they would not see one another; then he hurried back to the palace to where the girl still stood at her window, and making himself invisible, entered in and took possession of her. She sank to the ground under the shock, her aspect changed and her maidens carried her to her chamber and sent in haste for the King.

She had now no love to show her father but glared at him with red and angry eyes. Doctors were called but they knew by her fierce looks that medicine could do nothing for her and that only incantation could drive out the evil spirit. Magicians were fetched and their every charm and jot of occult lore was brought to bear upon the case, but all in vain; a week went by and still the jinn held fast.

The news of the evil possession of the princess spread through the city and at last reached the very man who had acquaintance with the jinn. When that fugitive from tongue and slipper heard about it, he bethought himself of a way to save the princess who must surely die if not soon set free.

He presented himself at the palace and told the guards that he was a magician who had come uncommanded to try his arts for the princess; he was admitted instantly and taken to her chamber.

The jinn recognised him at once and being angry with him for coming, worked upon the princess to tear and rend

him. Her hands and feet were soon bound fast however, then the man went close and whispered in her ear, "Friend jinn! I am here for your good; I have a word for you privately."

"What is it? Tell me and go away."

"You know I wish you well; I am here to tell you that the woman we both fled from is here in this city. I have come to warn you before I go further off. Good-bye."

"Thanks! thanks! friend of good counsel! Wait a moment; let me go first and do you follow in a little."

Immediately a cloudlet of mist issued from the lips of the princess and melted away. She raised her head, sane and sound, and seeing so many men in her chamber who had no right of entrance, she hid her face and whispered, "Father! who are these? Send them out, in Heaven's Name!"

The happy King now asked by what spell the demon had been driven out and listened to the exile's story with great content and amusement. When it was ended, he bestowed such land and money on the lucky man as let him live at ease from that time forth. No more did the exile taste of abuse or of the slipper; he took to himself a gentle-voiced partner of his prosperity and often reflected that in good truth, there is one use for a quarrelsome woman.

## The King and the Brahmani or Derh- chahār and Arhā'i-chahār.\*

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THERE once ruled a King in Hindūstān, so clever that his subjects nicknamed him Derh-chahār (*i.e.*, One-and-a-half). He had the habit of going about in the disguise of a beggar (*qalandar*) to learn the good and bad of his people's lives. One day he went out to a village at some distance from his capital, in order to get at the truth about some land that the river had washed away and about which there was dispute. As he walked along, he came upon a little girl, sitting at the edge of a sown field, from whose appearance he judged that he might accept water from her hands. He asked her who she was; she answered, "I am Kāmini, the brahman's daughter."

"Will you give me a drink of water?" "Certainly," she answered and at once ran home, rinsed and filled a cup, dropped a few blades of grass into the water and returned with it to the thirsty man.

"Why is this grass in the water?" he asked in some disgust.

"Oh! silly qalandar!" replied the child, "don't you know even as much as that? I put the grass in the water because it is a hot day and I do not know whether you are fasting or not. If you drank off all that water, fasting, you would get head-ache and a pain; now you will sip it and won't be hurt."

Amused at the small girl's early wisdom, the disguised King asked her other questions as he slowly drank the water. She answered so gaily, so cleverly and with so much humour that

\*The Hindūstāni names given in this title seem to be sobriquets and to imply that the first man named, Derh-chahār, had one-and-a-half (six-fourths) of common wits while the second, Arhā'i-chahār, had two-and-a-half (ten-fourths). It may be mentioned that the Emperor Aurang-zib nicknamed Rāja Jai Singh *Sawāi* (One-and-a-quarter) because of his unusual talent.

he was highly entertained. He tried to outwit her in the mimic war of wits. "You are a small girl and very light," he said, "why do you not fly away in the wind? Can you tell me that?"

"Of course I can; I don't fly away because the ground holds me by my feet when I stand up, and by my seat when I sit down, and by my back when I go to bed," she replied, looking saucily at him as much as to say, "There's your answer!"

"Aha! little one!" he remarked, "you make fun of my wits now, but some day I'll make fun of you. I promise you I will marry you and divorce you, then the laugh will be on my side."

Such words from a musalmān to a brahmani were an insult and although Kāmini was but nine years old, she had a clear sense of her caste dignity. When divorce, and that by an out-caste man, was promised her, she burned with blind rage of the powerless; without a thought, words rushed from her lips which were to seem to her later as binding as a vow.

"You could not do it, even if you were the King," she exclaimed. "If you did marry me and divorce me, I vow that, if you were the King himself, I would bear you a child and I would humble you to set your hand to turn the rice-mill. If I didn't, I am no brahmani."

"Clever as you are," laughed back the qalandar, "you could never do that." Then he rose from where he sat, asked her father's name, put money into her hand with the words, "Take that as if it were the King's gift," and left her.

A few months passed; the King did not forget Kāmini nor did she forget his words or her own. To carry on his joke, he sent messengers one day with a royal *palki*, to ask her in marriage and to take her to the palace. He ordered her father to be told that the cause of his daughter's distinction was her reputation for talent and ready wit.

The brahman was filled with consternation at the King's request. Kāmini's marriage with a caste-fellow had of course

been long arranged ; there was too, the great difficulty of difference of creed. He remonstrated civilly with the royal messenger, saying, "I have always heard the King is just and merciful, but in this thing there is neither justice nor mercy. His Majesty is a musalmān ; I wear the thread ; if I consented to this evil act, how could I face my caste-fellows?"

"Very true!" replied the royal servant, "but think what an honour to be father-in-law to the King!"

"My honour lies in the respect of my equals," returned the brahman, "I beg you to lay my objection before the King."

"You may as well consent first as last," answered the messenger. "The King rules ; if he willed, he could take your daughter by force ; why not give her in response to his honourable request?"

The brahman was silenced and went into his house to talk over the matter with his wife. She had much to say in opposition to the King's request and she beat her breast, bewailing the shame that would befall their home. Her opposition decided her husband to act. "Enough! enough! talking will not help. Dress the child in our best ; the thing has to be."

Then the little Kāmini was made over to the charge of an ayah who had come with the royal *palki*, and was taken to the palace in the city where she at once recognised the King for the beggar of the insulting speech. Immediately on her arrival, the marriage ceremony was performed. When it was ended, the King spoke a divorce and ordered her to be conveyed home again. He smiled at her and said, "Now you know who the qalandar was ; I have kept my word ; I am not so stupid as you thought." To this Kāmini made no reply ; her own vow rose again in her will, strong and clear and binding. Full of helpless rage, humiliated and ashamed, she was put into the *palki* and taken back to her home.

The royal servants were terrified at what the King had



done ; they thought he must be mad to marry a bride only to divorce her, especially when that bride was a bramani. Their surprise however, was as nothing to the amazement of Kāmini's parents. They having submitted to one form of disgrace, were now crushed by another. "Alas! alas!" lamented her mother, "she has missed both roads ; she is divorced by a musalmān and she cannot marry a brahman." Cruelly they felt their shame, but at length, as all must do, they resigned themselves to the inevitable.

For over three years, Kāmini stayed quietly at home, busying herself with women's house-work ; she also learned all she could from books. Her strange position helped her studies on because, instead of going to a husband's house, she remained with her own parents and her daily lessons became her father's constant pleasure. Not a day passed without a silent rehearsal of her secret determination to fulfil her vow. When she was nearly thirteen, she took a step towards it, by asking her parents to give her a tent and three slave-girls, and permission to go to the city and learn other things than she could learn at home. A proposal so strange and, in their eyes, so improper met with flat refusal and much upbraiding. Not knowing anything about their daughter's vow, they saw no good ground for her desire. To their opposition however, she answered quietly and resolutely, "Forgive me! I must go. My happiness and honour depend upon it. Do not be anxious ; you know I shall not disgrace you by any act of mine. I mean well and I shall be brought back to you in safety."

At length, as her parents would not yield, she confided everything to them, from the first talk she had had with the King out in the sown field, to his words when he had divorced her. "He has made good his promise ; I have to make mine good. It depends on the Divine will, whether I shall succeed. I who am a brahmani must try to keep faith. Some sleepy-footed people let trouble overtake them and say that He is

the Knot-opener and will loose their bonds ; *I* know that men must fling themselves into secondary causes and strive to help themselves. It is right for me to put forth all my powers to gain my end, but, oh ! dear parents ! I long for your blessing and consent."

Moved by her pleading, they procured all she asked and dismissed her, with blessing and prayer, to work out her happiness in her own way.

Arrived at the city, Kāmini pitched her tent outside the walls, adopted musalmāni dress and engaged, for herself and her maids, teachers of Persian, dancing, singing, and playing on musical instruments. All worked hard and became expert performers. When this point had been reached, she hired a house in the city and there made busy market with dance and song. Praise of their skill was soon in every mouth ; they were mentioned to the King and at length, summoned to the Presence.

With great joy and some fear, Kāmini saw the road clearing to her goal. There was small chance that she would be recognized by the King ; he had seen her last a village child of ten, wearing the simplest Hindū garb ; now she was in her blooming girlhood, dressed in costly city-fashion as a musalmāni. She was a beautiful and gracious person to whose other charms were added dignity of purpose and the modesty of good repute. When brought before the King, her maids first shewed their skill ; then she tried her powers. She danced with grace ; she sang and played with finished art ; she recited with clear and modulated voice. The village child was completely hidden by the charms of her masquerade as a *lūli*. She set her dancing foot upon the royal heart ; she touched it as she touched her lute ; she thrilled it with her voice ; subdued it to her grace and beauty. Night after night she was summoned to the palace ; at length the King expressed his wish to marry her ; she had but to stretch out

her hand to grasp the means to fulfil one part of her vow.

Again she went through the ceremony of marriage with the King, this time with the rites befitting her seeming position, and she was given apartments in the palace suitable to a royal wife of secondary rank. Months sped by; there became a hope that she might bear a child and thus fulfil the first part of her vow. She kept her hope secret lest if it were known, it might hinder the fulfilment of the rest, for the King was childless and there would be strict guard kept over her if her hope were known. She therefore made request, on some well-devised family ground, that leave should be given her to go home for a time, the whereabouts of that home being carefully concealed. After much persuasion, she overcame the royal unwillingness to lose a companion so entertaining and was set forth with royal gifts and store of household goods. When bidding farewell to the King, she begged him to give her a keepsake, for remembrance and to bring back again to him. He told her to name what she would have; she said a signet-ring, a turban-jewel, a sword and a head-to-foot dress which he had worn. All were given; she went back to her parents who received her with joyous welcome and heard her tale with thankful hearts.

They provided her with the separate dwelling her loss of caste required, and there, in due time, a son was born to whom in happy omen for her plan of outwitting the King, she gave the nickname of Arhā'i-chahār. The child was dearly loved and most tenderly cared for. When he was five, she gave him a wise and clever teacher from whom he began to learn from books. He was a studious boy who read for pleasure; in her mind was the constant thought of how to fit him for the day when he might be known as the King's first-born. In his happy little world, he had this one grief,—the village boys were not always kind; some drove him off from playing with

them and called him by a word of shame. One day when he was 13 years old, he went sadly to his mother and said, "All the other boys have fathers; where is mine? Some boys would not play with me to-day; they say I have no father and they speak evil things of you and me."

"Light of my eyes!" began his mother, "they are but village children; they can know nothing of your father. The stream of your life flows from a lofty source; you are the King's son."

She now told him the story of her life and of her vow; she showed him the King's keepsake and spoke of the still unaccomplished part of what she had vowed.

At her tale the boy flushed rosy-red with joy and the uplifting of his heart from shame; he could not contain himself (*literally*, his shirt would not hold him) he was all alert to set out at once and present himself to the King.

"I shall not hold you back, my best beloved," said his mother "but the last part of my vow must be fulfilled before you show yourself to your father. The royal hand must be set to turn the rice-mill. This is a hard task; how will you do it, I do not know. Make my words good; prove me a true brahmani; then go to the King and claim your rightful place."

"Could anything be too hard to do for you, dearest, kindest Mother? Be happy; I shall succeed; am I not Arhā'i-chahār?"

In the dawn of the next day, she gave him a purse of golden *dinārs* and her keepsake; he packed all away in his belt on his back, received her blessing and set out.

\* \* \* \* \*

Arhā'i-chahār passed through the city-gate while it was still daylight and after walking awhile through the streets, turned up a decent-looking lane in which he found an old woman seated before a tidy house. "I am alone," he said, "will you

take me in for the night?" She had no child and was a kindly soul; she liked his manners and good looks, so she gladly welcomed him in. He stayed on with her and she took care of his precious things and held her tongue about them and him.

A few days after his arrival, he gave her money and asked her to buy him the complete dress and ornaments of a Hindūstāni woman. She took alarm at this odd request and also at his having so much money; she objected strongly to buying the dress. He however, quieted her fears and she agreed to do as he asked; moreover she bore him no ill-will for his masterful words, but went out and purchased all he wanted.

That same day at dusk, he tossed through the casement of the royal Audience Hall, a sealed paper on which he had written, "The double-witted thief has come to the city of the King with smaller wits. Let the guard look out." When the servants came next morning to sweep and spread the carpets and to set up the canopy, one picked up the letter and, thinking it must be a petition, conveyed it to the King. Derhchahār read the message with amazement at its insolence and ordered the Kotwāl (Police-superintendent) to make search for the writer. That writer, as a matter of fact, was close by, standing where he could see how his letter was received and hear the order it provoked.

That very night, when his old hostess was fast asleep, he left her house, wearing the Hindūstāni woman's dress. In one hand he carried a lamp and in the other a gift for a shrine; thus he started out to meet the Kotwāl. Their meeting was in a narrow street, of ill-repute as the haunt of thieves. The Kotwāl called roughly to the supposed woman to stand and explain why she was out so late. She stopped and by her gentle and charming air, changed his rudeness to flattery and admiration.

"O risen moon! where are you going?"

"Sir! I am going to offer a gift of thanksgiving because my husband has come safe home. He was long away and I vowed to make an offering at whatever hour, of day or night, I was gladdened by his return."

"Excuse me" rejoined the Kotwāl, "it looks very much as though you would have to go elsewhere; you have to come with me."

There is a verse which says that when the Kotwāl went to catch the thief, the thief caught the Kotwāl; so it was now; the policeman was ensnared by the very person he had sought from lane to lane, through bāzār after bāzār. He took the masquerader to his house, which was just what Arhā'i-chahār wished him to do; he helped on that deceiver's scheme, listened to his stories, drank the too-often proffered wine and at last, knew not at all what he was doing. The seeming girl led the talk to the fetters which lay in the Kotwāl's room, and, in the end, by cajolery and coaxing, got him "just to show how they are worn," and fitted them fast on the Kotwāl's arms and legs. A few more beguiling words, a few more cups of wine and the sleep of the drunken descended on the fettered policeman. In a twinkling, Arhā'i-chahār had bored holes in his victim's slippers and tied them on him for earrings, had hung wine-bottles round his neck; had blackened one half of his face and whitened the other; then he slipped past the drowsy porter and hurried home to the slumber of the contented.

The King had risen with the first breeze of morning to give audience, but Arhā'i-chahār had been alert before him and had again dropped his insolent message of defiance. "Send for the Kotwāl," was the royal command. In a short time, the messenger thus sent came back to say that the Head-policeman was lying in his house, in a most ridiculous state, and could not walk. "Carry him here as he is." This was

done and the wretched man was aroused to a sense of his condition by the laughter of King and Court. His story let it be surmised easily that he had been outwitted by the thief he went to take.

"Who will try to catch this bold rogue to-night?" asked the King.

"I," answered the Wazir, "I will bring him to the Presence to-morrow." Arhā'i-chahār of course heard this arrangement and at once took his own next step which was simply to put on a loin-cloth, paint the brahman's caste-mark on his forehead and twist his turban to match, hang the thread on his neck and taking his holy book, (*pohti*) in his hand, go out with a priestly air, to trick the Wazir. He walked along reciting, as brahmans do, and brought himself close to where the Wazir was standing outside the palace gate, waiting for his *palki*. As he passed by, he said, without a glance at the Wazir, "My *pohti* prophecies that to-night the Wazir will catch that thief."

"Does it say how he will do it?" asked the official. "I should be glad to know, because I am the Wazir."

"It is quite simple, my lord! it is written here," said the sham priest, showing the Sanscrit page which the Wazir could not read. "On the south side of the city, there is a tank that has a virtue well-known in ancient times, but now forgotten. If a man bathe in it, repeating certain words and with certain ceremonies, he cannot fail to attain his desire."

So strongly did this promise of that stirrer of strife and embroiderer of plain speech work upon the Wazir that he agreed to go with the brahman at dusk and ensure success in catching the thief whose collar the hand of his fancy already clutched.

It was at the third watch that the young plotter led his victim to the lonely tank. "Take off your clothes and leave them in my charge," he directed, "gather up your courage; dip under and, as you dip, vow to give two and a half pounds

weight of gold and silver in charity, if you succeed in your next undertaking." The Wazīr obeyed in every particular ; the water was chilly ; he was soon ready to come out, but was directed to dip again, to hold his breath and stay below as long as possible. ' When he emerged, panting, chilled to the bone and shivering, he saw neither brahman nor any stitch of clothing.

Arhā'i-chahār had run off at his best speed, tossing the Wazīr's clothes behind a bush as he went, right back to the city and to the Wazīr's own door. Here he cried out loudly, " My book warns you that this house is threatened by an evil thing ; it will come this night, in the form of a mother-naked man ; it will clamour to be let in and will call on persons of the house by name and will pretend to be the master of the house. Keep fast the door ; do not let it in ; throw stones on it. It is a demon." When it was so dark that only dim shapes could be seen, there came, just as the brahman had foretold, a knocking at the Wazīr's gate and a clamour to be let in. The porter however, kept the door fast barred and from above, the servants showered down the stones and clods they had gathered there in readiness. Of course the evil thing was nothing worse than the Wazīr who had had to wait before coming home till darkness should conceal that he wore nothing but his bathing cloth. He cried out who he was and raged against the stoning, till sense began to steal into the terrified household. " The voice is like the master's," said one ; the rest listened and became convinced. Later on when the Wazīr pieced his misadventures together, he saw that he too had been outwitted.

The Wazīr's story of this second trick upon the royal officers set the King's wits to work in a new direction. Evidently, he thought, this could be no common thief ; there was no word of stolen property ; there seemed something more in the affair than met the eye. He resolved to look into it himself



and to see what new deceit had been prepared for that night. He knew something was prepared, because a third defiance had been received. From the fringe of the *durbār*, Arhā'i-chahār heard the royal intention stated and hurried off to prepare for the last act of his mother's vow.

He bought and took outside the city, a tiny mat hut which in Hindī is called a *jhomprī* and is used by the poorest poor. This he set up in front of a jungle patch where a field path joined the main-road. He borrowed a cotton wrapper (*chaddar*) from his hostess, also her rice-grinding mill and some corn, a huqqa and tobacco. When he had bestowed all in place, he wrapped himself in the chaddar and sat down in the dusk to await events.

That night the King mounted with a great cavalcade, and with clinking and gleaming of chain mail and weapons, paraded the city in all those parts where a rogue might well be looked for. In vain! nothing unusual was met with. Being alert for adventure he ordered the gates to be opened and rode on into the open country. Arhā'i-chahār saw the torches and the glint of shining metal while they were far off; he hastened to hide his mother's keepsake away in the bushes, lit a tiny lamp and sat down inside to turn the rice-mill, completely covered by the cotton-wrapper. Nearer and nearer, rode the cavalcade along the high-road; nothing was seen by it, nothing was heard, till the tiny light and the sound of grinding attracted attention. "It must be a very poor and feeble woman who works so late," observed the King. He drew rein before the hut and called out, "Who are you that work so late?" Then again, having had a reply, "Do you know anything about the thief who has come to town lately?"

From the hut came the muffled answer that there *was* a thief of whom the speaker lived in dread; one who had been there several times and had taken a pull at her huqqa. "I

asked him his trade ; he said he was a man-deceiver. I wish he wouldn't come ; he might bring the police on me. O great Amir ! I see you shining through the chinks and your speech tells me you are a very Rustam. Perhaps he will come to-night ; listen to an old woman's prayer ; stop and kill him."

Something a little odd in all this gave the King the hope that he was on the track of his challenger ; he dismissed his followers to a place out of sight and hearing and, as suggested by the grinder, went into the hut to await the coming of the thief.

"I'll hide in the bushes," she mumbled, "if you will turn the mill, he will think I am here." She squeezed out through the back of the *jhomprī* and a moment later handed her *chaddar* in though the crack, saying, "Put this on to hide your shining armour." He did so and began to turn the mill.

Kāmini's vow was fulfilled ; there sat the King in humblest fashion, on the bare earth, wrapped in a coarse cloth and, with his royal hand, turning the lowly rice-mill.

Meantime Arhā'i-chahār put on the royal head-to-foot dress, the turban-jewel, the signet-ring ; he took the sword in one hand and in the other a lamp which showed him clearly ; then went to the front of the hut. When the King looked out to see who was there, the boy laid down his sword and knelt and kissed his father's feet. Somewhat perturbed by his unceremonious approach, the King drew his sword, but struck no sudden blow. He noticed that Arhā'i-chahār wore a royal dress, but he did not know it for his own. "Who are you ? why are you wearing what only kings wear ? Have you stolen them ?" Then Arhā'i-chahār rose and faced him.

"I am no thief, your Majesty," replied the boy, boldly but respectfully, "I am your son."

"My son ! I have no son. What is your name ?"

The boy could not repress a smile as he said, "My mother calls me Arhā'i-chahār (Two-and-a-half).

For a moment the King frowned because he guessed from the ring of triumph in the boy's voice, that he too had been outwitted. He was yet to learn that he was outwitted not only by the boy who had tricked his Wazir and his Kotwāl, but also the brahman child of the old day by the sown field's edge.

Enough was said by Arhā'i-chahār to induce the King to take him to the palace. There the whole story was told. The giving of the keepsake was remembered, but the King declared he had never for a moment suspected the musalmāni singer whom he had loved and regretted, of being other than she seemed, still less of being the brahmani on whom he had played his heartless joke—a joke repented of as soon as past. He had thought no harm was done by it because he had heard no complaint; he admitted he had done wrong and declared himself sorry for it.

"My mother is not one to forget an insult to her honour," rejoined Arhā'i-chahār.

"But, if all you say is true, why," asked the King, "why did she not claim her rightful place, as the mother of my heir, when you were born?"

"Lord King! she is brahman-born; she made her childish vow by her brahman birth; this bound her to fulfil it. Hers was truly a war of wits with you, but it was more. She had vowed to humble you who had insulted her caste; this she could not have done if she had brought me to you as an infant. She needed my help. Nor could I now have done it without deceit. Perhaps you will forgive us both if you recall your dealings with my Mother; others have suffered through you far more than you have suffered by my tricks and insolence. Through your divorce my Mother lived for many years without respect; after my birth, through many more. Shame has touched me too. Now her whole vow is redeemed; I, her son, have done what I have done, for her sake."

Words so bold and free won the King's heart ; Kāmini was sent for and given her rightful place as the mother of the King's heir. The three often talked later on of their war of wits and the King would laughingly confess that Kāmini and Two-and-a-half had been too much for One-and-a-half.

## **The Adventures of Princes Seet and Basant.**

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A DEFT thrower of the shuttle of romance has woven this web of misfortune and gladness.

The root of all the troubles of Prince Seet and his brother, Basant, was this; two sparrows built in a pomegranate-tree in the court-yard of their father's palace; eggs were laid and in due time hatched out. When the nestlings were only a few days old, the mother-bird got her leg caught in a twig and though the cock-sparrow did his best to free it, it remained fast and she died of the struggle to get it out. For some time after her death, the cock took care of his motherless brood, but he grew weary of his solitary work and came less and less often to the nest. One small bird fell out and was killed; there was ceaseless clamour of hunger and loneliness. The cock-sparrow brought another mate to the nest, but jealousy rushed through her at sight of the nestlings and she flew away. No coaxing would induce her to look after them, so at last, the cock made her very welcome on his own account and said she should be his own nest-mistress, that here was her comfortable home and why should she not stay in it to take care of his sparrows? "So long as those children are here, I will not live in it," she replied with decision. "Cast them out if you wish me to stay." The cruel father then dragged out his brood, with beak and claw, and let them fall to the ground. The hen-bird at once tidied up the empty nest and seated herself gaily in it.

Now the mother of the Princes watched this affair of the sparrows from beginning to end and grew sad when the small birds died, because she pictured to herself that it might be just so with her boys if she herself should die. She brooded herself into low spirits; when the fledglings had been killed, she took to her bed and there tossed from side to side.

When the King came from his *durbār* and found the mother of his sons so unhappy, he took her hand and said, "Why are you lying here? Why are you troubled? By Heaven's grace, all is with us as it should be. What is there to grieve about?" The royal begam told what she had watched and what was in her fearful heart. "If I died and you brought another Queen to the palace, the lights of my eyes, my Seet and my Basant, might perish like the sparrows." "

"O Queen! a wide gulf yawns between men and sparrows; birds may do such things, but men know good from evil. It is my prayer that you outlive me, but if this petition be not granted, know of a truth that I shall not remarry."

This solemn promise greatly comforted the Queen and she began to live happily again and to rest in what the King had said, "Are not those two living crown-jewels as dear to me as to you?"

A few months only passed before she had an attack of fever and, in spite of all the efforts of the doctors, resigned her soul to her Creator.

"The learned bit the finger of failure because they found no cure for death." The King was grieved to the heart, but when he had done the good works enjoined for the repose of her spirit, he set himself to practice resignation and to care for his motherless boys. The deep love which fathers ought to have for sons, he had for his and it angered him, if any mist of vexation dimmed their dear hearts.

The years slipped happily by till Seet was sixteen and Basant twelve years old. At that time, a neighbouring ruler offered his daughter in marriage to their father. The widowed King however had not forgotten his promise to his dead Queen and his sorrow woke anew when he recalled it; he spoke to his *mantri* who had his confidence, about the offer and his reasons for declining it. "I shall not remarry; my sons are happy and who knows how it might be, if I gave them a step-

mother?" His Wazir however, urged that it would not do to offend his frontier-neighbour; that the princes were now big boys and sensible; that the marriage state is good in itself and that it would be pleasant for every-one if gaiety and mirth were brought back to the palace.

Under this and other strong pressure, the King gave way and accepted the bride, who after four months' of travel arrived under the escort of a great army, with lavish plinishing and her train of maidens and old nurses and with uncounted gold and silver. On the day after the wedding, the King commended his sons to the care and affection of their young step-mother and asked her to prefer their pleasure to his own. By his wish, they went, from time to time, to pay their respects to her, but they could not bear to see her in their Mother's place and did no more than to salute her respectfully from a distance. She often asked them to stay with her, but they could not bring themselves to do so or to like her. After a while, she took a quite wrong fancy to Prince Seet who was about her own age and not a sad and sober person like the King. She wanted to be friends with him, she tried to flirt with him, but in vain; he rigidly observed the etiquette due between a step-mother and her husband's grown-up son and he made no response in friendly ease. Provoked by his indifference and also somewhat dull, she became the more set on his conquest. Indeed to tell the truth, she quite fell in love with him. One day, about a year after her marriage, she made occasion for a private talk with him. The boys were playing at ball, as they often did after lessons, in the courtyard which her rooms overlooked, and the ball when Basant missed it, happened to go through the doorway of the zanāna, where it rolled out of their sight. "Go in and fetch it," said Seet. "I'm afraid," said Basant, "you go. If we went into the zanāna now without sending a word, the Queen might be very cross and tell our Father. You go, you are the biggest."

Now while they talked, the Queen picked up the ball from where it lay in the entrance to her own room, and she kept it hid, till the boys had agreed together to go in both at once. They stepped inside; she shewed herself at the door of her private room and tossed it to Seet, saying, "Play in here where I can see you." "Lady Mother! Honoured Queen!" replied he with profound salaam, "manners and modesty forbid us to play ball in the Queen's presence." "What harm can there be in sons playing ball before their mother?" she asked with some petulance. "Play your game and don't be shy." The boys thinking she really wanted to watch the game, began to toss the ball from one to the other. "I can play too," cried out the Queen and picked up the ball and threw it, but not to one of them for she flung it with all her force into her private room. She next told Seet to fetch it out, ran after him when he was inside, and shut the door on Basant. She took his hand and asked him to sit down and let her tell him what was in her heart; from this she went on saying things unfit for a step-mother to utter to her husband's son. He snatched away his hand and gravely replied that she was as his Mother and that what she said was wrong for her to say and for him to hear; then he left her without another word.

Of course, she was furiously angry with him and frightened too, lest he should tell his Father and be believed. "I'll be revenged," she said to herself, "I will accuse him before he can accuse me." So to save her reputation and out of malice and vanity, she swathed herself in a veil of deceit and fraud. She dug her nails into her face and tore her hair; she rent her clothes and rolled upon the ground before her astonished maids, who came running at her cries, lifted her to her bed and fetched the King out of his *durbār*.

"What has happened all at once?" he asked amazed.

"O King! I will kill myself; if I live, I live without honour."



No reasonable man would suppose a girl could behave in such a way without a cause; the King could not but think that something really bad had been done to her; he flew into a passion and demanded who had hurt her. "If anyone has cast a wicked glance at you or spoken ill of you, I will gouge out his eyes and wrench his tongue from its root; if anyone has pointed the finger of scorn at you, I will chop it off.

"I can't name him; you could not punish him; I will die."

Little by little that wicked woman told the King about the game of ball, but she told it upside down and put Prince Seet in her own place. The blinding flame of anger kindled in the King; without asking a single question of his sons, he commanded the executioner to take them both into the waste and there put them to death. In his insane folly, he even ordered that their eyes which for so many years had looked love upon him, should be brought to witness to their death.

The whole Court was confounded by this brutal order, so unlike the King's true self and so unexplained. There was no help however, the headsman had to obey orders. He fetched the astonished boys from their apartments, but before Prince Seet mounted to ride out with him both he and Basant stowed away, upon their persons and in their saddle-bags, whatever of their jewels and valuables they could carry off. "You can have them when we are dead," he observed to the headsman.

Now, spite of his trade, this man had a heart and, like his assistants, was much concerned at the King's cruelty in sending to death sons so handsome and so guiltless. When his party had ridden some miles out from the city, he said to his subordinates, "Friends! we have no traitor amongst us; let us save these boys; by so doing, we shall be free of the guilt of innocent blood at the Day of Resurrection. We can kill a deer and take its eyes to the King." To this the rest agreed; the princes were set free and advised to ride by night and

hide by day, till they had passed their father's frontier. They were much cheered by this kindness, and having given the men a present, rode away. They went on till they found a hiding-place; there they stayed till night drew her dusky curtain and led forth the army of the stars. Night after night they rode, lonely and a prey to the sadness of wounded love.

Some days after they had crossed the frontier, they had a cruel misadventure. They were crossing a sandy waste where water was scarce and one morning early, Basant left Seet where they had slept, and went in search of a well. He was long absent and Seet, becoming intolerably thirsty, went elsewhere to look for water. In this way they lost each other and Basant was plunged in an ocean of woe.

Seet rode along the high-road until he saw domes and minarets rise against the sky and met with several men, mounted on Arab horses and dressed as faqirs, who were watching on the road. He asked them for a drink of water; they gave a cool and refreshing drink. After this, they invited him to go with them to the neighbouring city where they conducted him to the royal bath, treated him with all honour, and having offered him the throne, put on him royal robes and all the insignia of sovereignty. These unexpected events were all like a dream to Prince Seet; for a time he forgot his brother and when, later in that day, he sent to search for him, no trace of Basant could be found.

The explanation of his own good fortune was that the King of that country had died some months before, without an heir and he had commanded his amirs to wait before choosing a successor, until a stranger should come to the city whose face and mien revealed all the marks of royal birth and breeding. Those signs were clear in Prince Seet and the amirs joyfully hailed him King.

To return to Prince Basant; he went back with water to the place where he had left his brother, waited there till full noon

and then, being faint with hunger, took the high-road into the city. Here he bought food, but did not stay. Hoping still to find Seet, he went back, by the road he had come, as far as a wayside hut near which he tethered his horse while he cooked his food, and in which he slept.

Sad! sad! blind Fortune was now to fling stone after stone at that lonely child. What tricks she was to play him, what gnawing fetters to bind about his feet! How she is to cast him into a whirlpool of adversity and give him to the buffeting of its waves!

At midnight the police, making their rounds, came upon Basant's horse and, on seeing its excellence and fine accoutrements, jumped to the conclusion that it must have been stolen. They listened to no word of his, but conveyed him to the common jail. Next day, the capture of a thief was reported to the King who ordered him to be kept fast and his horse to be taken to the royal stables. Not till long afterwards did he see and recognize the horse, and thus learn something of his brother's fate.

Now it chanced that just at this time, certain merchants had loaded a ship and were ready to sail, but when they had lifted their anchors, the vessel would not move from the quay. Astrologers were summoned who went into the heart of the difficulty; their opinion was that the ship wanted a libation of human blood and that she would not move till this had been poured upon her prow. Accordingly, the traders sent round the city in search of some person who, for a price, would give a man to be slain. The search was vain, but the evil-hearted Kotwāl of the place, coveting the blood-money, asked the King whether the horse-thief should be sacrificed to speed the merchants on their way. To this the King replied that, though it was a crime to shed innocent blood, it was none to kill a rogue. Basant was accordingly, made over to the merchants who were about to hand him over to the ship's

butcher when he begged permission to ask a question. With his wits sharpened by terror, he inquired whether it was necessary to take life, or whether it would suffice to offer the libation. "All we want is to get away," replied the merchant. Hereupon, Basant made a deep cut in the middle finger of his right hand and from it let blood drop on the ship's prow, at the same time repeating the bismillah. At the sound of the blessed words, the laden vessel creaked and strained, gave way slowly and at length left the shore. The merchants would have set Basant free, but not so the sailors who thought he must be a magician and that it was best to have him with them, lest the ship should stop again.

The great sails were spread in a favouring wind ; the ship flew like a bird over the waters ; in due time her haven was prosperously reached. Her cargo was landed and taken to the caravan-sarai ; thither came the local traders and bought up all the goods. Visits of courtesy were exchanged between them and the foreign merchants. Many who saw Prince Basant, asked who he was, for they admired his Joseph-like beauty and wished for such a son. Now, during the voyage, he had endeared himself to the chief merchant so much that he had come to be treated like a son. He therefore often went with his so-called father to make the return visits demanded by etiquette. By this means, he became known to one of the city merchants who was raised so high above his fellows by wealth and merit, that the finger of comment was ever pointed at him. This merchant had an only child, a daughter, moon-browed, crystal-bodied, with the hue of the rose-water rose. Her name was, fitly, Gul-rukh (Rose-cheek) and she was without a peer in talent and accomplishments. Regarding Prince Basant as his fellow-merchant's son, her father found him all he desired for a son-in-law and proposed to marry his daughter to him. This proposal was welcomed by the foreign merchant because he knew that great wealth would accompany

her hand. The wedding was arranged and, after a further stay of some six months the ship received Gul-rukh, her attendants and her ample marriage outfit. When sad farewells had been spoken, the sails were set for home.

The young prince was very happy with his charming companion; all seemed well with him, but he little guessed what uncivil surprises Fortune had yet in store. Alas! alas! she had a new fraud for his every day and a new caprice to flutter round his head. To no man she gives two good turns of her wheel, nor does she long check her march over tortured hearts. What she did to this poor boy must now be told, though the writing-reed is feeble for the task and though the writer's tears must often blur her page and her heart be torn by pity. She must not shrink, however, from the painful task.

The chief merchant had not seen Gul-rukh until after she came on board; love pricked his wicked heart at the first sight of her beauty. This evil love changed all his good-will for Basant and even put thoughts of murder into his mind. He actually waited for a chance to drown the very boy of whom he had often said "This is my son, the delight of my eyes, the love of my life."

The Moon's time of glory passed and the dark nights came; on one of these, the wind and the sea rose and tossed the ship about so violently that all on board were much afraid. The sailors had much to do, too much to notice what went on amongst the passengers; the chief merchant and Basant were standing together, holding the bulwark and watching the storm; it was a most dreadful time, but still that wicked man could keep his sinful purpose. The ship lurched; in the darkness no-one could see that that big strong man, when the bulwark neared the waves, lifted the boy and flung him over into the raging waters. Having done this, he ran hither and thither, crying that a man was over-board. Now several of

Gul-rukh's women also were on the deck and they let her know instantly that a man was drowning. Without the smallest delay, she and they threw a bedstead over the ship's side. If it is God's Will," she said, "it will save the poor fellow." When the storm went down, enquiry was made for Basant ; he was nowhere to be found ; she guessed who had gone over-board and gave herself to lamentation. The murderer however, was highly content, "The peri-face is mine, and so are all her goods," he thought to himself.

Poor Gul-rukh sorely longed for her own people ; she would have had no friend but sorrow if her old nurse had not reminded her that all that happens, happens by the Divine Will ; that, as in the narrows of this world there is no choice of path, resignation only avails. Moreover she pointed out that it was not beyond the Divine Power to let the bedstead Gul-rukh had thrown into the sea, become for her husband like the Ark for his Reverence Noah.

Before the voyage was over, the chief merchant proposed to Gul-rukh to marry him, using many soft words and much persuasion. He now made light of Basant, speaking of him as only a servant and of his adoption as merely one in name. Now Basant had told his whole story both to the merchant and to Gulrukh. She at once suspected something false when she heard the merchant tell untruth about his birth and station. He did not know that she also had heard the facts of Basant's misadventures and she did not let him know it. Various occurrences awakened suspicion in her heart ; she guessed how Basant had been lost, but she had to be most discreet because she was entirely in the merchant's power. She did not at once decline his offer of marriage, but said that in her country and class, it was usual for a widow to bestow alms for six months, and to spend a further six in retirement. "This I propose to do," she said, "I shall then be free to think of re-marriage."

"What are a few months?" thought her suitor and agreed

to wait. Sun and wind favouring, the ship quickly made her port. Gul-rukh's possessions were landed and kept under the merchant's eye, but she and her maids lived in a house apart. After a few days had been given to re-union and repose, the merchant waited on King Seet to present gifts and display foreign rarities. Little did the listener to the story of the voyage guess the part his brother had had in it; concerning Gul-rukh no single word was uttered.

The sad and lonely girl, fast held in another's power, forced herself to fulfil her works of charity, uncertain of her fate and ignorant that Fortune was about to smile again on Basant. Rumours of her kindness and beauty reached the King who made enquiry about her and, having heard who had brought her to his city, upbraided the chief merchant roundly for keeping utter silence about a person so worthy to be recommended to a king. "I hear she is a delightful woman and an angel of goodness, tall and straight as a cypress and with the cheek of the red rose. Why did you not tell me about her?"

These words made the merchant fear that he might lose the royal favour; moreover he had divined Gul-rukh's suspicion of his part in Basant's death, so that, on the whole, he judged it best not to press his suit upon her, but to bring her to the Presence. Accordingly he informed her that the royal mind inclined to see her, and he bade her prepare to go to the palace.

Gul-rukh had not been so long in King Seet's country without hearing how he had come to rule and how he had lost a brother, Basant. She had convinced herself that he was her husband's brother. When she had been received by the King with marked admiration and, later on, when he expressed the wish to marry her, she had to use all her wits to avert this new misfortune. She pleaded for delay saying that for a reason she could not disclose, she had vowed not to re-marry until she had heard the story of Prince Seet and Prince Basant; if a year's delay were granted, it might be that someone would

be found who knew and would tell her the tale. To hear his own name linked with his brother's on her lips astonished the King ; brotherly affection surged again in his heart and again self-reproach wrung it. He entreated Gul-rukḥ to tell him what she knew, but she excused herself and was silent.

One suggestion she made to him, namely, that he should set up a new bedde-house where food and clothing would be given to travellers, each of whom was to be asked if he knew the desired tale. It was in her thoughts that her husband might be heard of in this way, or he might even come himself, because it was near this city that he had lost Seet and to it that he and she herself had been sailing. Willingly the King carried out her scheme ; many a weary traveller enjoyed rest and comfort through it, but, of all who came, not one had heard the story asked for. Some indeed could tell of the cruelty of King Seet's father, but so little Gul-rukḥ, of course, would not accept.

We have now to follow Prince Basant's adventures to their near and happy ending. By the working of his destiny, the bedstead cast overboard by Gul-rukḥ saved him from drowning. He got upon it, giving thanks to the True Rescuer, and when the storm had abated, the tide carried him to the not-distant shore. He was terribly overcome by the horrors of the night and broken down by the buffeting of the waves, but when some hours had passed, was able to walk inland to where stood a little town in which he sold his one remaining valuable, his signet-ring. After a night of sleep and a good meal, he began to ask the road to King Seet's country. No single person gave him clear directions and he lost much time by following wrong ones. One day Fortune favoured him, for he chanced upon a party of qalandars as they sat in the shade of a road-side tree, planning their next journey. He heard one say, " My dear fellows ! we beggars have seen the sights of many lands ; we have dwelt in many a fair city, but we



have not seen King Seet's country. Let's go there next."

His companions agreed ; when they all rose to start, Basant, his heart flushed with hope, rose too and joined them. They asked him why he wished to come with them. "We are wandering beggars," one said, "we take no direct road ; you had better travel straight on, without wasting time with us." "O friends of God! your goal is mine ; I am going to King Seet's country."

"If that is so, then come with us by all means ; it will be pleasanter for you and you are little likely to find anyone else going so far. Why are you, such a boy as you are, making this solitary journey? Is your home there?"

"Home!" the word of love, gave voice to his sorrows. "I have no home. For me it is written to find affliction and degradation. No cup of the red wine of comfort and peace comes to my hand. For me one grief pursues another ; for me the perfidious days lead on woe after woe. Home I have none, but in that far land, I may find a friend."

His burning words kindled the warm hearts of the qalandars ; they put up a prayer for him and welcomed him to their company. He donned the beggar's cloak, adapted himself to the beggar's ways and thought the beggar's thoughts, so that he might be at peace with them and keep their friendship. They treated him kindly, sharing their alms with him, for, as Shaikh Sa'di says, "If the man of God eat half a loaf, the rest goes in beggar's largesse."

The wayfarers moved on at their own slow pace, sometimes tramping day after day, sometimes making a long halt. At last, quickly or slowly, they came to the outskirts of the city of their desire and there entering a rose-garden, sat down to rest. In the cool of the evening, the rose-seller's wife came out to gather flowers. After greeting them kindly, she asked why they sat there instead of going to the royal bedehouse where they would get their portion of excellent food.

She added details about the new alms-house and about Gul-rukh and the story they would be asked to tell. Then she gathered her flowers, set her basket on her head and left the garden. The flower-seller's words opened the rosebud of Basant's heart to delight. He saw at once that Gul-rukh had made this plan of the bede-house and the story in order to preserve herself and to get news of him. Springing to his feet, he cried to the qalandars, "I know the story! Take me to the King."

"Don't swagger, youngster," rejoined one of the band, "a thousand wayfarers, I dare say, have come and gone and not one knew it. We who have wandered round the world for years, never heard its name till now. How should you, a mere boy, know it?"

"O elders! the world is big and much goes on in it; every man cannot know everything. Those who do not know this tale can only say so, but I do know it. What matters my youth? to me this romance is old. I am not so foolish as to go to the Presence on a false ground; I know the tale."

His manner surprised his companions. "He may be right," said one. "He is clever and sensible, and how well he threads the jewels of his speech! Come, youth of the silvern tongue! we will stand by you and go with you to the King."

They first went to the bede-house where all happened as the rose-seller had foretold. Later on they were escorted to the palace and there Basant was put forward as the one who knew the tale. Spite of the changes wrought on his face by trouble and hardship, Seet saw his likeness to his lost Basant and leaving the Audience Hall, hastened to tell Gul-rukh of his hope that at last she would hear the story she desired. "Prepare yourself to listen; the stranger shall be brought into this gallery where you can hear him from behind the *parda*."

The King's news quickened her dead heart; its throbbing told her that her own Basant must be near. She took a place

where, unseen, she could both see and hear ; King Seet sat on a divān close by ; the qalandars and Basant were stationed on the carpet before him. The tale should have begun, but the teller asked that the chief merchant also should be there to listen.

In the presence of that wicked man, the boy recounted all his troubles. His hearers wept, all but the merchant ; tears rose in even Basant's eyes. When he reached the account of the storm at sea, the evil-hearted murderer trembling, turned from red to yellow ; his heart dried up with fear ; he saw his affairs hurrying to their end ; he looked from side to side for the messenger of death.

The tale flowed on ; "Yesterday that unfortunate prince reached this city, one of a band of beggars. To-day he tells you his own story." With a cry of joy, Seet snatched his brother to his heart ; their words died of delight. Basant soon went behind the *parda* where the lovers gazed at one another, speechless with content.

Royal gifts were bestowed on the kindly qalandars ; a dwelling was given to them with money sufficient to keep them all their lives. The King wished to put the merchant to death, but when Basant pleaded that the wrong-doer had once saved his life, death was changed to banishment.

In this world's inn, no man stays more than a few days ; men pass through it as water flows ; all taste of death before whom all are equal. King and beggar, that messenger draws by the crown-lock away. Man puts off the loaned garment of life at the moment when his farewell to Earth changes to his welcome to the Life-to-come. Will he, or will he not, naked and clutched by death's eagle claw, he has to give back to its Merciful Lender, the intrusted loan of Earthly life. Seet therefore died a few years after his reunion with Basant.

But let my pen cease its sad record and bring Basant's story to a close in joy. By his brother's will, he succeeded Seet on

the throne. The new sovereign upheld all his predecessor's laws and customs, and to them added others in harmony with his own generous nature. He lived in perfect accord with Gul-rukh ; many beautiful and pious children were born to them ; their wedded life was of the happiest. Basant reigned many years, safeguarding his kingdom and God's people. In his full time, he too surrendered his trust of life to his Creator, enjoining on his sons to preserve his dynasty, to protect the peasantry and to do justice to all men.

## Māmā Susān.\*

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IN a tiny house of the poor quarter of an Indian capital, lived Bibi Fātima and her maid Māmā Susān. Both were widows and miserably poor; the Bibi was old and bed-ridden. Susān had been born in her mistress's house and had for her a daughter's affection. For some years after the death of the Bibi's husband, Susān had worked in the city to support her mistress and herself, but there came a time when she could find nothing to do, and when both women were in the direst poverty. Money they had none; things saleable had all been sold; nothing could be earned. Bibi Fātima grew more and more feeble; Susān was gaunt with hunger, desperate for them both.

"I must set my wits to work and find a way out of this misery," she said to herself. She made a secret plan and comforted the Bibi by telling her she had thought of something new to try. Far indeed was the old woman from imagining to what lengths Susān's plans could reach, or what talent to plot and scheme her quiet manner hid. "Do what you think right," she answered. "I say one thing only, don't try to get what belongs to other people without working for it."

"God forbid!" said Susān. "Don't worry yourself by thinking of such dreadful things."

At a fitting hour she put on a newly-washed wrapper in which, though she looked poor and lowly, she might pass for the decent servant of humble people, and betook herself to the Judge's door. She asked and obtained leave to present a petition to him, but when he questioned her about her com-

\* Māmā Susān is a story from the Persian, based on an old Buddhist legend of which illustrations can be seen on the main staircase of the British Museum.

plaint she murmured "I bring no complaint ; I seek no justice. There is something to tell."

"Say on."

"Let it be told to your Honour in private." At a sign from the Qāzi, all went aside ; Māmā Susān stepped nearer and whispered, "O great Sir! my master's daughter has been miserable and unsettled since that day ; she longs to see you again."

"My good woman!" said the astonished Judge, "I don't know who she is."

"Sir! she is my master's daughter. When she saw you walking in the Pleasure Garden, she lost her heart to you ; she has been unhappy ever since. To-day the poor thing said to me, 'Go to him, greet him for me ; tell him I long to see him. Ask where would be the harm in my feasting my eyes on him again.'"

This flattery inclined the Qāzi to wish to see the sender of the message ; he asked where she lived and whether he could get into the house unnoticed.

"No one would see your Honour," replied Susān. "She lives in a quiet lane and is her own mistress ; she lives alone and admits only me. She could not wish you to run a risk."

The Judge agreed to go and asked Susān to fix the day and hour. "Vouchsafe to come, my lord, at the third watch. The road is so-and-so ; you will find me sitting at the door. Come by yourself, illustrious one, that no one may have word of the matter."

From the Judge, Susān went straight to the Police-superintendent and to him told the same tale with the same result, his visit being arranged for a little later than the Qāzi's.

These appointments made, she went to the bāzār and there borrowed, in another person's name, what was needed to make a small room habitable, carpet, divān, pillows, canopy, etc. The Bibi's little house contained two rooms both opening into

an outer hall in which was the door. In one room she lay bedridden ; in the other Susān placed what she had brought from the bāzār to furnish it. In due time, she seated herself at the door where she could see the lane, and then awaited her first guest.

The Judge arrived punctually ; he was led inside and seated on the divān. It was a hot day ; Susān swaying a fan over him, asked him if he would like to take off his outer garment and sit comfortably as he might do at home. He did this and entrusted his clothes to Susān, together with such money as he had with him. "I will take them to my mistress, so that she may know you are here and be glad," said she. Accordingly she carried them to the Bibī and laid them on her bed. When the poverty-stricken creature saw them, she trembled with fear at their value. "Where did these things come from?" she asked. "Do you want to get me a bad name? and to disgrace me in my old age? Take them away ; such things are not for us." Susān hushed her up and whispered, "Be silent! Here am I scheming how to keep you alive ; I am not thinking of myself at all ; and now you talk in this way!"

Having silenced the Bibī, she returned to fan the Qāzi and beguile him with winning and caressing words. After awhile however, he became impatient and observed, "Your master's daughter sent for me ; I do not see her." Susān raised her voice, as though to speak to someone in the next room, and cried, "Come quickly, lady! Your face is like the moon, why trouble to adorn it?"

Now while the Judge sat waiting, the Police-superintendent knocked at the door. Susān hurried to open it, but she shut it again instantly, with a word of excuse, and rushing up to the Qāzi, whispered, "The Kotwāl is at the door with a number of men."

The Judge was thunderstruck ; "The Kotwāl! what does he want? Was he ever here before?"

"Never! never! I cannot think what he wants."

"O Susān! I can't possibly be seen by the Kotwāl; I can't go out while he is at the door and I can't stay here for him to see me. Hide me somewhere, in Heaven's name, till he has gone away. Don't tell him I am here."

"O cherisher of the poor! there is no place here to hide you in."

"You made me come," said the Qāzi crossly, "you must get me out of the mess. It would never do for the policeman to catch the Judge here. He would make me a laughing-stock."

As part of her plan, Susān had borrowed two big grain boxes and these she had set in the hall. She now suggested to the Qāzi to get into one of these and let her lock him in till the Kotwāl had gone away. "Open it! open it," said the Judge. So, though not yet overtaken by death, he was confined and tightly fastened in.

The Kotwāl was then admitted to the house; he likewise was seated, fanned, beguiled, relieved of his outer garments and money and kept waiting. When the Bibi saw his spoils, she was still more afraid and angry, but again Susān hushed her up and again returned to ply her visitor with attentions, till he observed, "I do not see the person who sent for me."

"O great sir! make yourself comfortable a little longer. She is so long because when she heard you were coming, she went to bathe. Her hair is quite dry and is oiled and combed and she is just putting on her dress and ornaments. She will be here in a minute."

Having brimmed his mind with lies, she made a trivial excuse to leave him, ran to a neighbour and told her that a drunken man had crawled into the Bibi's house and could not be made to move. Would the neighbour, she asked, come to the door and cry loudly "Māmā Susān! congratulate your master's daughter for me; her father has come off his journey." This,



she said, might scare the man out. Having so arranged, she ran back to resume attention to the Kotwāl. She had hardly waved the fan, before a voice was heard crying what she had put into the neighbour's mouth, and ending it with "Behold! here he is, on his way to see her."

Of course the Policeman heard the cry; he was taken aback and afraid of the father's anger. He too begged to be hidden; with him Susān went through the same play and in the end shut him up as she had shut up the Qāzi. She locked both boxes and taking the keys and the two men's money with her, departed to buy food for herself and her hungry mistress. With good appetite she ate an excellent supper and, without more ado as to the two cramped and confined men, stretched herself on her bed to sleep profoundly. She woke early, washed her hands and face, and made a good breakfast; then she went to the bāzār where she hired porters whom she made take up the two boxes, bier fashion, on their shoulders and convey them to where the King was showing himself to the people, at the palace casement.

The King noticed her, and asked who she was. She told a story of being the servant of a merchant who was still in a far land, but had sent home to his wife, rarities for the King's pleasure; she said that she had been ordered to bring these to the King. Permission having been given, the two boxes were carried into the inner court where she took the keys from her girdle and handed them to the servant named to open the boxes.

One box after the other disclosed a man huddled down like the Father of Sorrows (the Crane), with knees together and head tucked low. On one bent head was seen a Qāzi's turban, on the other a Kotwāl's. When both were raised, the amazed King recognized his officers.

He could not but smile. "What ghosts are these?" he asked, but both men hung their heads in silence and shame. To tease

them the King went on "Our palace is for the peace of the living, not for the repose of the dead. Let the bier-bearers carry these confined men to the burying-ground." He then demanded an explanation of what he saw from Māmā Susān. She first kissed the ground of reverence and asked for an assurance that when she had told her tale, her life should be spared. The assurance having been given, she enfolded the mystery.

"O King of the world! my mistress and I are widows. She is very old and is bed-ridden. After her husband's death, we managed to get on for a time, but at last there was nothing left to sell and I could get no work. We came to the very sharpest pinch of poverty. I thought it all over; I saw that from her hand, nothing could come and that through the waning of my destiny, I had no glimpse of any wage. So I resolved to cast the net of deceit over some rich man and to get from him what would keep us two widows alive. Yesterday I went to one after the other of these two gentlemen and I gave to each a false love-signal. I crammed them with absurdities and dressed up the abject in such fine attire of words, that they wished to come to our poor house. The spell of my empty words so worked on their hearts that they really came to the beggared home of us destitute women. I have played these juggling tricks and I have spoken these lying words only because of our utter need. And I got what I wanted, for my tinsel speech drew their gold and their costly raiment." Then she described all that had happened at the Bibi's house and ended with, "It was their own fear that got them into these boxes, but when they were safe locked up, I became afraid they might kill me when I let them out. For this reason I am here, since your palace is the asylum of the poor and the royal word a safeguard. O King! I have told you the truth; my impudence and deceit were only to save my mistress from starvation."

The King could not but be amused at Susān's stratagem but

his smile soon faded and he said gravely, "Little woman! no juggler could have played off these tricks better than you have done, but your offence is great. You have done very wrong to bring men of such high station to shame. Death is your due, but you meant only good for your mistress and you have claimed my protection. Go! this time I pardon your offence." Then he gave her a purse of gold for their support and dismissed her.

The King severely reproached the Qāzi and the Kotwāl and ended by commanding them to live in future at the level of their rank and by threatening dismissal if they again entered into what was unworthy of it. They were plunged in shame, expressed their contrition, and said, "We will never be so deceived again. We have greatly failed and have been greatly punished. A new snare was set on our path and an unforeseen trial encountered." They received the royal pardon and with it dresses of honour in accordance with their differing rank.

Māmā Susān told the whole story to Bibī Fātima and showing the King's purse said, "I obtained the royal bounty by all these tricks; see what good for us has come through deceiving those two High Mightinesses. We should have starved; now you will eat what I have gained; it will keep you till I can get more." The Bibī however declared, with great anger, that she would have nothing to do with the money. "Take it away! Ill-fated, ill-bred, ill-doing creature! go out of my house. Old and helpless as I am, the Lord of both worlds will have me in His keeping. Your meddlings with evil would lose me my honour."

To all this, the maid quietly answered that she was perfectly happy because she had managed so well that her mistress need want for nothing. "I will go away, as you bid me," she said, "but each day I shall come and cook for you." Then she took a small sum of money and departed to live with a

pilgrim woman, always with the next step towards saving her mistress in her mind.

With the Hāji she stayed till she had learned to recite and to talk as pilgrims do. When she knew enough to let her pass for one who had been to Mecca, she bought from one of the Hājis four shirts which had been written over with texts in the holy city. She also completely disguised herself, colouring her face and putting on a blue wrapper; then with the shirts under her arm she betook herself to the Qāzi's door. Here she recited, in her sweet low voice, and her clear intonation let her words reach the Judge's ear; he called her in and asked the news of Mecca. She retailed all she had heard from real pilgrims, and showed a shirt which, she said, had sovereign virtue because there would be vouchsafed a vision of the Divine Glory to any person who bathed on a Friday at midnight with it wrapped round his neck. Such a prospect uplifted the heart of the Qāzi; he took the shirt, and having kissed it laid it on his head and eyes, dismissed the Bibī Hāji with a gift of one hundred golden *dinārs*.

From the Qāzi's Susān hastened to the Kotwāl's and with him went through the same performance which, in his case, ended by his pouring into her skirt, with profuse apologies for its insufficiency, the sum of fifty *dinārs*. Both men's gifts, Susān promptly deposited with a banker.

"Two shirts remain," she thought, with the King and Wazīr in her eye. To the Wazīr she went first; her tale opened that rose-bud of the parterre, the heart of the Prime Minister; him too her broidering tongue beguiled, so that he freely gave five hundred golden *dinārs* in return for the offered blessing. Having made a small present to a door-keeper she considered with some fear, how she could get access to the Presence. Having made a small present to a door-keeper, she persuaded him to carry the fourth shirt to the King and to speak to him of its virtue. The royal heart inclined, with some suspicion,

to see the Bibi Hāji. The King looked her well over, without recognizing her, and asked her the news of Mecca. Listening to her caressing and gentle tones, he remembered them and knew her for Māmā Susān. "This is the woman who coaxed the Qāzi and the Kotwāl into the grain-boxes," he thought, but he kept silence till he had made enquiry about her. Having accepted the shirt, he gave her an order on the Treasury for 1000 *rupis*, but with it gave also a sealed note ordering the officer in charge of the Treasury not to pay at once but to put her off.

Now the Treasurer was a stupid person ; his first folly was to read the King's letter aloud, "Do not pay her at once, but put her off." (*Fi'l faur madih, aurā dar lālo pāto bedār.*)

On this the Bibi Hāji cried out, "O sir! you have read it wrong. It must be 'give it her at once,' because His Majesty knows that I am just ready to start on my pilgrimage and have no money in my hands. What you take for 'do not give' (*madih*) is 'give' (*bidih*); the words are much alike. The King meant you to give it at once, I am Lālo of Pāto and my brother Pāto is waiting at the door for me. Please pay me quickly."

The Treasurer was not awake to her wiles and was deceived by her modest air and soft voice ; he thought it might be as she said and that she really was one of the pilgrims the King often helped with money for the Haj. He counted the *rupis* into bags ; she took them, salaamed, put them into a coolie's basket and hurried with them to her banker.

The King wondered several times that day whether Māmā Susān would contrive to outwit the Treasurer. Next morning he heard of her ready tact and cleverness. His was a merciful heart ; when he sent officers to bring her before him, he charged them to use no roughness for he remembered what virtue it was that had led her to deceive. He asked her name with gentle kindness.

"It is Māmā Susān, your Majesty."

"Was it not you who tricked the Qāzi and the Kotwāl?"

"Assuredly, it was I," she answered.

The King then questioned her about her new ruse with the holy shirts and she told him all the truth. She said that now she had money enough for her mistress's life and her own, that there was no need for her ever to play such tricks again.

The Most High creates Kings to be as the shepherds of their people; He bestows discernment on them so that they may understand the condition of rich and poor, and He adorns them with virtues and goodness beyond the praise of words. In this King all lovable attributes were embodied, and his kindness and wisdom led him now to search into Susān's story and test its truth. Her fidelity and affection won his praise; her tact and talent compelled his admiration. In very truth, she was no common cheat, but a gentle creature driven to bay and forced from her own nature. A second time, the King forgave her, again he gave her a gift and with it, counsel. "Play no more such tricks, Lālo sister of Pāto; if you want help come to me."

From that time forth, Māmā Susān deceived not a single person in even the very smallest thing.

## The Living Miracles.

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ONE day when a great king was sitting on his throne, in all pomp and state and with his Ministers and courtiers gathered round him, he, being in an idle mood, twisted his handkerchief round his hand into something he called a bird and asked his Wazir what he thought of it. The Prime Minister broke out into extravagant praise ; said he had never seen such a wonderful pigeon before and that it was a perfect miracle. The king having listened complacently to this nonsense, observed that it was now the Wazir's turn to show something that had never been seen before. He added, in an access of folly, that if he did not do this before a year was out, he would be put to death.

The Wazir was thunderstruck ; he asked and obtained leave to go home where he went straight to bed, wrapped his face in his *chaddar* and lay bitterly repenting his silly words or considering what wonder he could show his royal master. While the bird of his fancy was flying on every side, seeking for the marvel, his wife came in and, gently drawing the cloth from his face, asked what ailed him. He opened his eyes, but on seeing who it was, closed them without speaking. She forthwith went to their son, Muhayar (the Helper) and told him how his father was lying with signs of trouble on his brow, with his face hidden and too vexed to speak.

The boy at once went and begged to share his father's grief. "It is a son's part," he said, "to share a parent's sorrow. If I can do anything to comfort you, I shall buckle on the belt of endeavour and do it." Of course, his father told him what had occurred and after a time, accepted his suggestion to go to Court next day and ask for a year's furlough in which to find something worthy of the royal notice.

The year's leave was granted, the Wazir returned home, called his family together and talked the matter over with them all. Muhayar resolutely declared that he himself would go out into the world in search of some new thing, overruling all the many objections his troubled parents made against his plan. Early on the following morning, he put gold and jewels into his belt, to meet the charges of the way, and rode off alone. He was a little cast down by parting from his dear ones, but his heart grew strong when he fixed his thoughts on the Supreme Reality. He endured the hardships of the way cheerfully; he was almost always alone; where he found water, he drank; sometimes he killed some creature of the wilds and cooked it over a wayside fire or ate wild fruits and vegetables; sometimes he had reached a caravan-sarai at nightfall and slept under a roof, but more often, Earth was his couch and Heaven his canopy. When he had travelled many days without seeing a city or a village, he reached a spot where an aged faqir had made a temple of praise in the solitary waste. When greetings had been exchanged between him and the boy, the old man inquired who Muhayar was and what ill-wisher had bound the burden of travel on him and set his sunlit face to gloomy tasks of lonely exile. Muhayar told him his story from beginning to end and said, when he had told it, "I am here by Divine guidance." The hermit became kind and sympathetic when he heard of the son's devotion; he gave counsel and promised that what was sought would be found, though only after labour and pain. "Three months' journey to the south," he said, "there lies a deserted city; thither you must go; ride straight through it and on for eight miles more, till you come to a well-built castle which has a lofty gateway opening into a courtyard. You will see a beautiful girl sitting at a window near the gateway; she will call you in; obey her; there you will obtain your heart's desire. Gladdened by these life-giving words, Muhayar fell at the



old man's feet and begged for his intercession. The darwesh put up a prayer for him and blessed him as a devoted son ; then the boy mounted and galloped on his way.

Three months of steady travel brought him to the promised city ; he rode in ; there was no sign of life ; all was still and silent, though the shops were decked with wares and merchandise lay piled in the market-place. It was a ghastly place ; he passed through in dread and, hurrying out by the southern gate, gladly saw the open country. At the eighth mile, he found the castle the faqir had described and there saw, seated at a casement, a moon-faced girl who having beckoned him modestly to come near, said, with delicate intonation, "That is no place to wait ; come into the court-yard, if you value your life." He entered and was at once led to her parents by the watcher, Peri-rū, (Fairy-face).


When he had eaten and rested, he told his tale to his hosts and asked, in return, if he might know why the city was deserted and why they themselves were living in such a comfortless and perilous place. "My story is one which will grieve your heart," replied his host," but since you ask it, I will tell it. Three months ago, a horde of Jinns swooped down on our city and devoured our King with his Queens and many of the chief men of the State. They came by night ; many people fled at once in the darkness ; in a few days, all whom the jinns had left alive, were gone. I was Prime Minister of that hapless King and I got away with my people to my ancestral castle. Here we have stayed ever since ; we have not once set foot outside the walls and my daughter sits at the window to warn all comers of the dangers of the road."

Tears flowed afresh at this tale of woe and ruin. Muhayar was invited to stay awhile in order to rest from the fatigues of his journey and this he accepted because to remain there had been the counsel of the darwesh. During the next few

weeks, it occurred to the exiled Wazir that it would be good to marry his daughter to his fellow Wazir's son. So he said to his guest, "Here we are, shut up in this weary waste like prisoners. The Good Lord has brought you here for the happiness of my daughter. I hope you will marry her." Although Muhayar liked Peri-rū greatly, he declined her father's offer, saying, "I am not a prisoner; I am here on business; I cannot consent to marry in a foreign land." A few days later, the offer was repeated; the Wazir got quite excited about it and pressed it so much that at last there was no help for it; since Muhayar had to stay in the castle, he let himself be married to Peri-rū.

On the wedding-night a mystery revealed itself about the bride and it persisted on all other nights. She used to spend the whole day with Muhayar, playing chess or cards, or telling stories, or making music with him; she was always ready to chat, always good tempered and gentle, but when night fell, she invariably disappeared. She offered no explanation and Muhayar put no question, but he grew more displeased each day and was consumed with silent indignation. He thought of his father's risk; of how he himself had been married against his will, but still he did not like to disregard the command of the darwesh by leaving the place. Nine months of his father's furlough had passed; he was worried and despondent and at last spoke out to Peri-rū.

"Only three months are left to serve my father in and I am far from home. Here I stay bound by a chain that has no link of love. I see you by day, but where you go at night I do not know in the least. Not one word of comfort have you said to me to lift even a grain of the trouble that weighs down my heart. Since you do not love me or sympathize with me, I see no good in remaining here; I shall leave you." Tears rained from the girl's eyes through all this speech, and they fell the faster at the word of parting; still she was as silent



as the picture on the wall. Muhayar was more vexed than ever when that night he sought the couch of sleepless care. Next day, he renewed his complaint; this loosed the tongue of narrative and she told him all.

"What you say is right," she said, "your complaint is just, but I too have no choice; I too am helpless. I will tell you everything. The real root of your trouble and my trouble is that this country is in the power of the King of the Afreets, Rāja Andar. You have heard how his hordes desolated our city; they have not left the country, but still hold it in terror. We, here, are alive simply because one of their captains has taken pity on us and has secured his King's protection for us. He advised my Father to let him take me to the Rāja's Court and he taught me to win favour and protection for my dear ones, by singing and dancing for his King. My Father had no choice; he had to let me go; the very night the plan was made, the Afreet Captain had me carried through the sky in a sedan-chair, by four jinns, to Rāja Andar's palace. There he took my hand as a father might and presented me to his master. The Rāja talked to me kindly and treated me with respect; he said to me, "Wazīr's daughter! I will count you as my own child. Come here every night and I will deal well with you. Whenever you are disposed for it, dance and sing for me." While one watch of that night still remained, the four bearers were called for and brought me home. Since that time, I have gone every night and we have gained much indeed by the Rāja's favour, for my dear ones have been saved." Peri-rū broke off here, but, after a short silence, resumed her tale. "When my father gave me to you in marriage, he did it without consulting the Afreet Captain who perhaps will be angry. I have made up my mind to tell him of it to-night and to ask his help for you and me." Her story gave Muhayar new happiness; great was his joy when the Afreet showed no anger about the marriage, but advised that he also should

appear before Rāja Andar and having won favour, ask help to save his Father.

Left to themselves the two young people began to practise for the captivation of the Rāja, Muhayar to drum and Peri-rū to dance. His touch suited her measure so well that her little feet seemed scarce to touch the ground and never failed her once. Dance and drum became more closely wedded as time went on, but at length one day only remained between Muhayar's Father and his doom. Nothing marvellous had been found to intervene and save him. Muhayar was very sad, but the Captain promised him all would be well and that help was certain. That night, the two young people went together to the Rāja's palace and, as they were being carried through the air, Peri-rū told Muhayar what he had to do at the Court. "When we are set down, jump out quickly and mingle with the crowd of musicians; then when I beckon for someone to play for my dancing, come forward and do your best. When the Rāja asks you to name your reward for playing well, say you know that you cannot have what you wish for. We will dance and play again; the Rāja will ask you again; then do you say that you want one thing only, the hand of Peri-rū." All went as she had planned; she began to dance to her usual accompaniment, but soon put on a languid air, looked to right and left and at last, stood still. The Rāja asked what was wrong. "I do not know," she said, "my feet will not lift; perhaps this drummer is tired." "Call another then," said Rāja Andar. She turned to the group of players and beckoned to Muhayar who took a drum and played his briskest and crispest. All marvelled at his precision and at her light poise and unflagging feet. Motionless as a picture, the dance-loving Rāja watched the fine display to its end. Then he gave to each performer a pearl from his own necklace and asked them to name some further gift. Again they danced and played, again were

asked to name their reward ; all went as it had been settled it was to go ; their plans, under the guidance of their friend, the Captain, moved along till the Rāja dismissed the rest of the company and remained in private to listen to Muhayar's petition for help to save his Father's life. When the Rāja had heard all, he said with great kindness, "Have no fear ; that King could make nothing but a cotton pigeon ; he shall see not one miracle in return, but four and these breathing and living."

The Rāja forthwith sent for a cosmetic of beauty and had it rubbed on the faces of both young people, so that they became resplendent as the Sun and Moon ; he had them dressed in garments of gold brocade ; their hair was loosened and crowned with golden circlets ; gleaming jewels were hung on their necks and ears and arms and feet ; they glowed with rubies and flashed with diamonds ; rosaries were put into their hands and they were transformed into such a *jogi* and *jogini* as the pen is dumb to praise. Peri-rū's four bearers were called and two jinns also who were skilled magicians ; all, together with the friendly Captain, received secret orders from the Rāja ; farewells were spoken ; the sedan-chair was wafted through the air and in a few hours had traversed the space of Muhayar's many months of weary travel. It was set down just outside his native city and near the river ; the jinns made it invisible and themselves took the form of common men. The splendid pair, obeying a magic stress, spread a deer-skin close to the bathing-place and sat down. Some men and women began to come out of the city to bathe and draw water. When they saw those two wonderful figures so blessed of aspect and clothed so gloriously, they were seized with such terror that some even fainted away. Others ran back to take the news and bring their friends to see. "Come ! come !" they went crying, "we don't know where they have come from to sit there ; they are not of this Earth ; perhaps they are peris ; or

a King and a houri come from Heaven for this world's good. Come! come!"

Of course the King of the country heard about them and, his curiosity being stirred, he sent them a polite invitation to visit him in his palace. The jogis rose at once and, hand in hand, walked before a crowd which followed as the lesser follow the greater Lights of Heaven. The King and his Court were as much amazed by the sight as the common people had been; after a stupefied pause he found words to ask where they had come from and whither they purposed going.

"We are a jogi and jogini on our way around the world and our road has brought us here," said the man.

"I have a wish," said the King, quite humbly, "I will mention it, if it will not offend."

"Kings are not refused by beggars," replied the jogi, "allow us to learn your wish."

"It is that you will accept from me a comfortable and unpolluted dwelling in my city in which you will remain so that I may fill my eyes with your beauty and splendour."

"Wayfarers take up no settled quarters," replied the jogi and declined the royal offer. He said moreover that he himself had to go elsewhere at once, on business of great importance, and that for the fifteen days of his absence, he should leave his jogini in the royal charge.

"O gosain!" cried the astonished King, "you have only just arrived; why go away so soon? how can you leave your wife here by herself, in a strange city?"

"What is there remarkable in it?" rejoined the jogi. "I have to go; my wife stays here." Having said farewell, he set out to the open country, leaving his wife in the royal charge.

Not two hours later, the jinn magicians showed the jogini a vision of her husband dead, and she, guided by their magic arts, a musalmāni though she was, raised the Hindū wail, "Rām, Sīta! Rām Sīta! Let me make *sati*; burn me, burn

me." The King went to her and protested that it was all impossible. "It is not two hours since the jogi went away in perfect health, how can you know that he is dead? I will not let you be burned; he will come back and think I have played him false."

"I know he is dead," she replied, so firmly that there was nothing to do but prepare the funeral pile. Perfumed wood was heaped on the river's bank; the devoted woman walked steadily out of the city, followed by a great crowd. Near the burning-place, four men were seen dressed in red and having a bier with them. "There is my jogi's body," said the widow and, going close, she drew down the face-cloth and disclosed the features he well-remembered as her husband's to the King's wondering eyes. She mounted the pile without sign of fear; the bearers laid the corpse with its head upon her knees; logs of sandal were stacked above her head; the wood was set alight and in a short time, there was left of that lustrous pair only a small heap of ashes. Over these the King ordered a tomb built such as in Hindūstāni is called a *sati-chaura*.

Now the King's thoughts had been so full of the marvellous jogis that he quite forgot his threat to the Prime Minister. Spite of appearances, he was dreadfully afraid that the jogi might come back to claim his wife and he spent the fifteen days of promised absence in great anxiety. On the last, the jogi, true to his word and the royal fears, appeared and asked for the jogini.

He was told all that had happened, but refused to believe any of it; casting suspicion on the King's word, he said his wife could not have made *sati* for him because there he was alive. "Come then to where we saw you both burned," said the King, "and see the tomb I have built over your ashes."

"Certainly!" replied the jogi, "but what you say cannot all be true, for here am I, as you see." They went to the burning-place together; the King pointed out the new tomb; they

went close up to it and opened the door that the jogi might himself see the ashes within. When they looked inside there were no ashes to see ; what was there instead? What! but the living jogini, seated in all her radiant splendour and calmly telling her beads.

The King fainted with terror. When he came to his senses, he asked what these enchantments meant and what the jogi wished to gain by them. "What awful visitants are you? Ask me for what you will, then, in mercy, go back to your own place." In reply to this, Muhayar spoke in his own person. "O King! dressed as I am, you take me for a hindū jogi, but, in truth, I am Muhayar, the son of your Wazīr. The living miracles you have seen are my Father's return to you for showing him a cotton pigeon."

These words put the King to shame. Later on in the day, he went himself to his Minister's house to ask pardon and to offer higher rank and honours. Forgiveness he received, but both Father and son refused to serve him, and he returned to his palace, humiliated by their refusal and by their words of blame.

The jogi and jogini had gone, hand in hand, from the burning place, and by the magic of the jinns, were changed as they went to their true appearance as Muhayar and Peri-rū. When they appeared before the Wazīr's house, he ran out and fell on his son's neck, then led them both to the inner apartments where Muhayar's Mother was. Happy tears rained down to cleanse from the skirts of their hearts the dust and soil of the year's separation. Many questions were asked, but Muhayar said, "My story would take long to tell and here is one who waits for your welcome," and laid Peri-rū's hands in his Father's and Mother's, saying, "Give this Wazīr's child a place in your hearts closer than you give me; shower love upon her, so that no mist of trouble may rest on her dear heart." Two days of perfect happiness were spent in listening



to the stories of the travellers. On the third, the Afreet Captain disclosed to them, that he had orders to convey them all to the desolated city and that in it Muhayar was now to rule. Smiles greeted this news and, above all the rest rejoiced Peri-rū who thought of rejoining her own people. Having gathered together his family and dependants and all the things needed for the journey, the Wazir beat the drum of departure and his cavalcade started. Through four months the road was spaced into single day's marches, it was the fifth when the city of sadness was reached. Here in a lucky hour, the Afreet made Muhayar King and set him on the throne to the music of kettle-drums resounding from the great gallery. Peri-rū's parents were fetched from their retreat and there was the great joy of reunion. Thus after sixteen months from the beginning of his troubles, Muhayar received rule over that realm, from the hand of the Most High. The garden of his fortune which had flagged in the heats, grew green in the perfumed shade and pleasant dews of the Divine Mercy. He prostrated himself in thanks, and from this passed to praise the Afreet, wise of word and quick of wit, whose kindness had brimmed their cup of joy.

King Muhayar wrote a letter of thanks to Rāja Andar and told him all that had occurred ; folded it, sealed it, gave it to the Captain and let him go. He set to work at once to re-people his city ; he proclaimed his accession far and near, and also the glad news that the jinns having left the country, life was safe again ; former owners flocked back to their shops and the prosperity of the city waxed and waxed. Peace and comfort filled the land ; Muhayar grieved the heart of none.

After a few years, the parents of Muhayar and Peri-rū began to occupy themselves solely with the future life and became hermits. Death claimed the four well-living ones in their due time and all took their way from the narrows of this mortal pilgrimage to the spacious realm of the eternal home.

Their children's hearts paid what is paid, in sorrow for the departure of beloved parents ; in time they freed themselves from grief, through patience and resignation, for except in submission, there is no help in the darkest pass.

Muhayar and Peri-rū lived in harmony together down to their last breath ; when their first-born son came to manhood, his father named him his successor and himself withdrew from the cares of government and became a sit-at-home. Sometimes Peri-rū's four bearers would present themselves to convey her and Muhayar to visit Rāja Andar and sometimes that Afreet Captain, for whom they had the love of children, would come to visit them.

God knows if this tale is true.

## Azrael, the Death Angel and the Good Woman.

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THERE lived, in an Indian village, a musalmāni whose whole life was devoted to the worship of the One True God, to reciting the Five Prayers and to telling the Rosary of Praise. Moreover not a day passed in which she did not make supplication to be granted a vision of Azrael, the Death Angel. After many years her petition was granted; the Angel was commanded to go to her hut. He came there while she was at prayer, and saluted her with "Peace be upon you, saintly woman." She turned and saw one so shining of face and of aspect so lovely that she feared, but she took heart as she looked, to say, "Who are you, my son, that enter an old woman's house without leave."

"Do you not know me? I am Azrael whom you have so long prayed to see."

"May I be your sacrifice! O Angel of Death! I have truly wished to see you, but I have always heard that you were terrible to look upon and that you snatch away men's lives with violence. Now I see you, your face is a shining light and you look kind and joyous. Have people spoken falsely about you?"

"No," said Azrael, "it is true that sometimes I am terrible and that sometimes I take life with violence. Would you see this?"

"Assuredly, I would."

"It would be well to do so. Go now to your neighbour's and you shall see me as you desire to see me. Remember however, to have no fear for yourself."

Now that neighbour had a quarrelsome and ill-tempered daughter who, when the old woman came near, abused her and struck at her with a besom. While she scolded and scowled,

the Death Angel came to take her soul away, no longer glorious and beautiful but dark and awful. He drew near the girl; she fell to the ground in convulsions, writhing like a snake that has been wounded on the head. The miserable creature beat the ground with hands and feet and lay long in the clutch of pain. At length the bird of her life escaped.

The old woman went home trembling and there, weeping and fretting, put herself in the girl's place and pleaded for pardon of her own sins.

Once more the Angel visited her; he asked if she wished to see him again take away a life.

"No! no! I saw that girl die and I do not wish to see such a sight again."

"In what you will now see, there will be no terror. Go to the house of the *lūli*." She rose and obeyed.

The singer smiled a welcome and, calling her near the bed, gave her a seat and after asking for her welfare, listened with kindly interest to all she said. Into the midst of their pleasant talk, the Angel entered, his face beautiful exceedingly and with roses in his hand. He drew near the bed and, having let the sick woman take the perfume of the flowers, without pain or pang, he gently drew her soul away.

Sorrow fell on the house, the holy woman took her way home bewailing her own loss of the *lūli's* pleasant ways.

Once again the Angel visited her. "How is it with you, saintly woman?" he asked.

"With me it is well," she answered sadly, "but O Azrael! if I might, I would ask you of the things I saw."

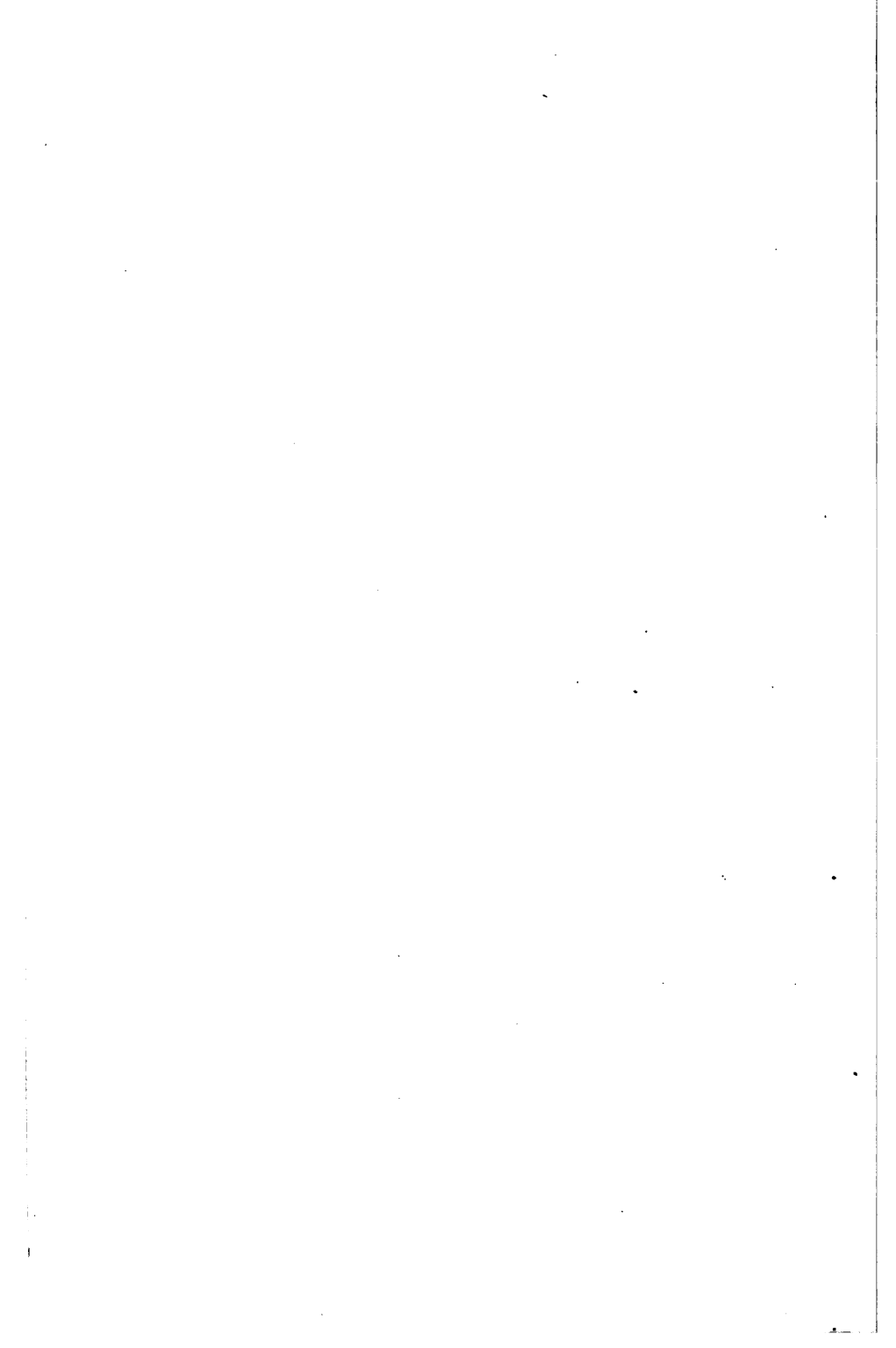
"Ask without fear."

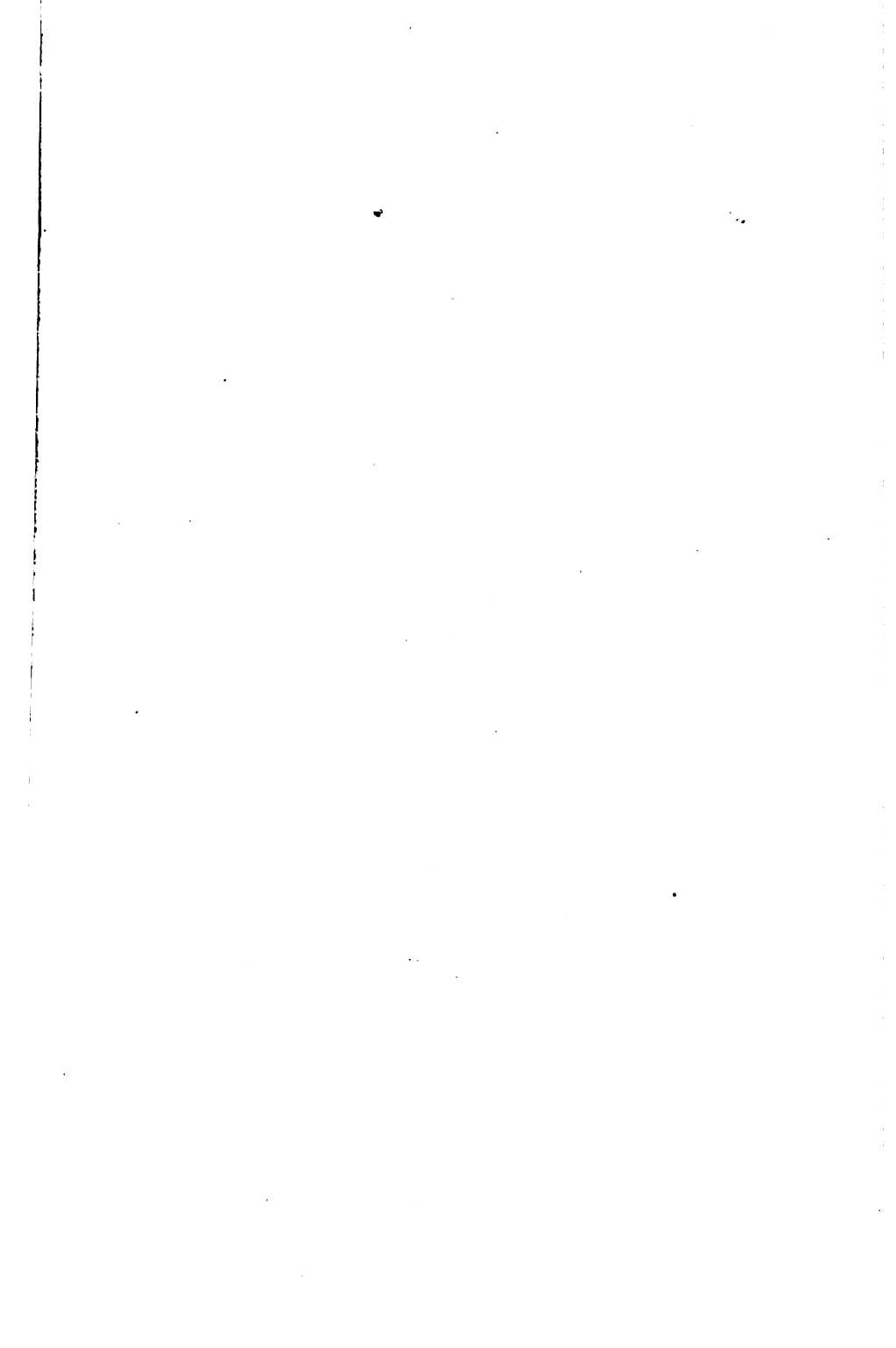
"Tell me then, why you took the life of the girl who had not sinned, with cruel torture? and why, at one breath, gently and with smiles, you drew away the *lūli's* whose whole life was a sin, for to sin was her trade."

"Have you forgotten," asked the Angel, "how the girl used

to treat you? She wounded many a heart and was cruel and rough. For this reason, I was commanded to rid the world of her, early and with harshness. Have you forgotten the singer's kindness to you? She was good to every living creature. Therefore I took her soul away joyously and tenderly. Your wish is fulfilled; you have seen me and much besides. Farewell," he said and passed from her sight.









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